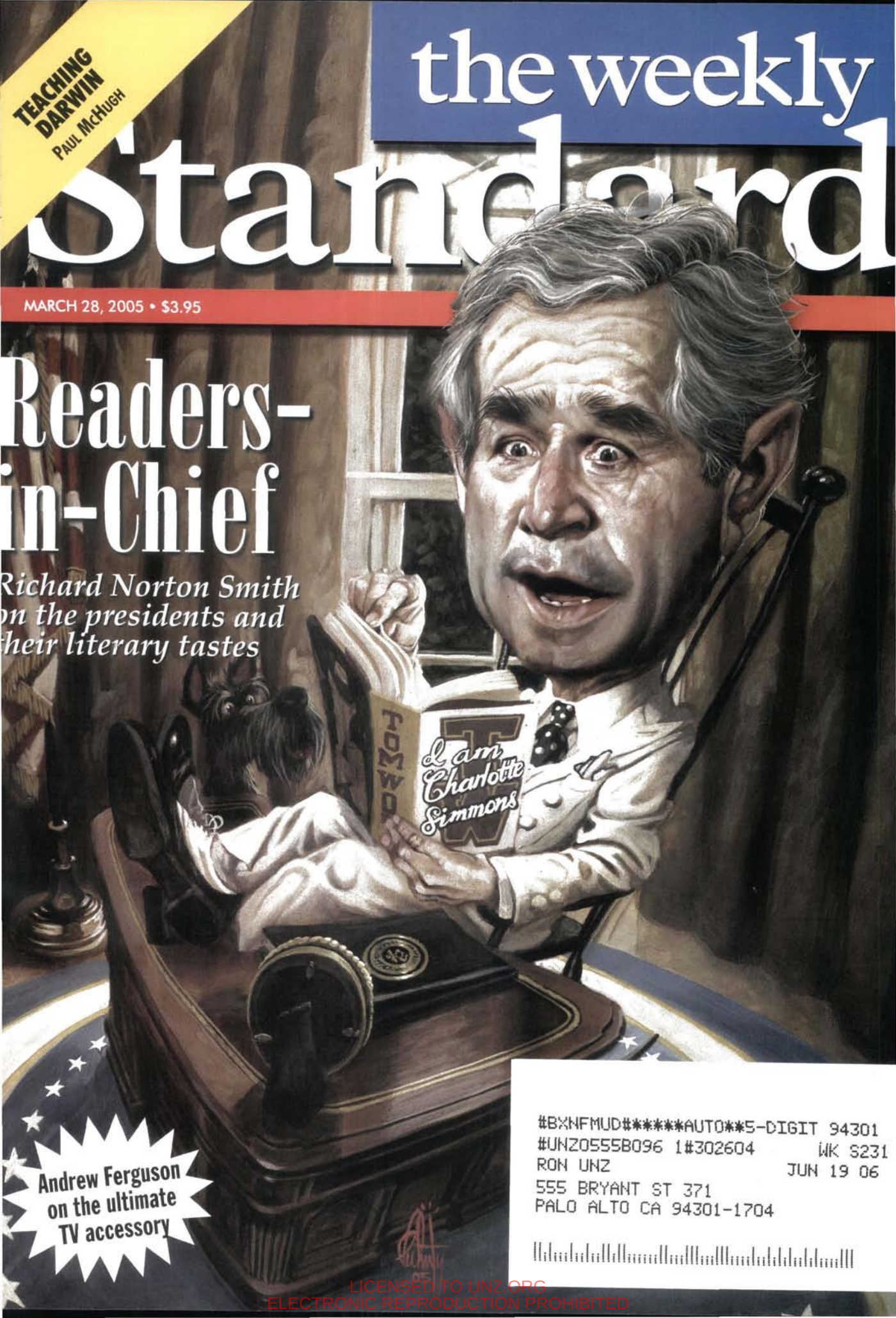
the weekly Standard

MARCH 28, 2005 • $3.95

TEACHING DARWIN
PAUL McHUGH

Readers-in-Chief

Richard Norton Smith on the presidents and their literary tastes



Andrew Ferguson on the ultimate TV accessory

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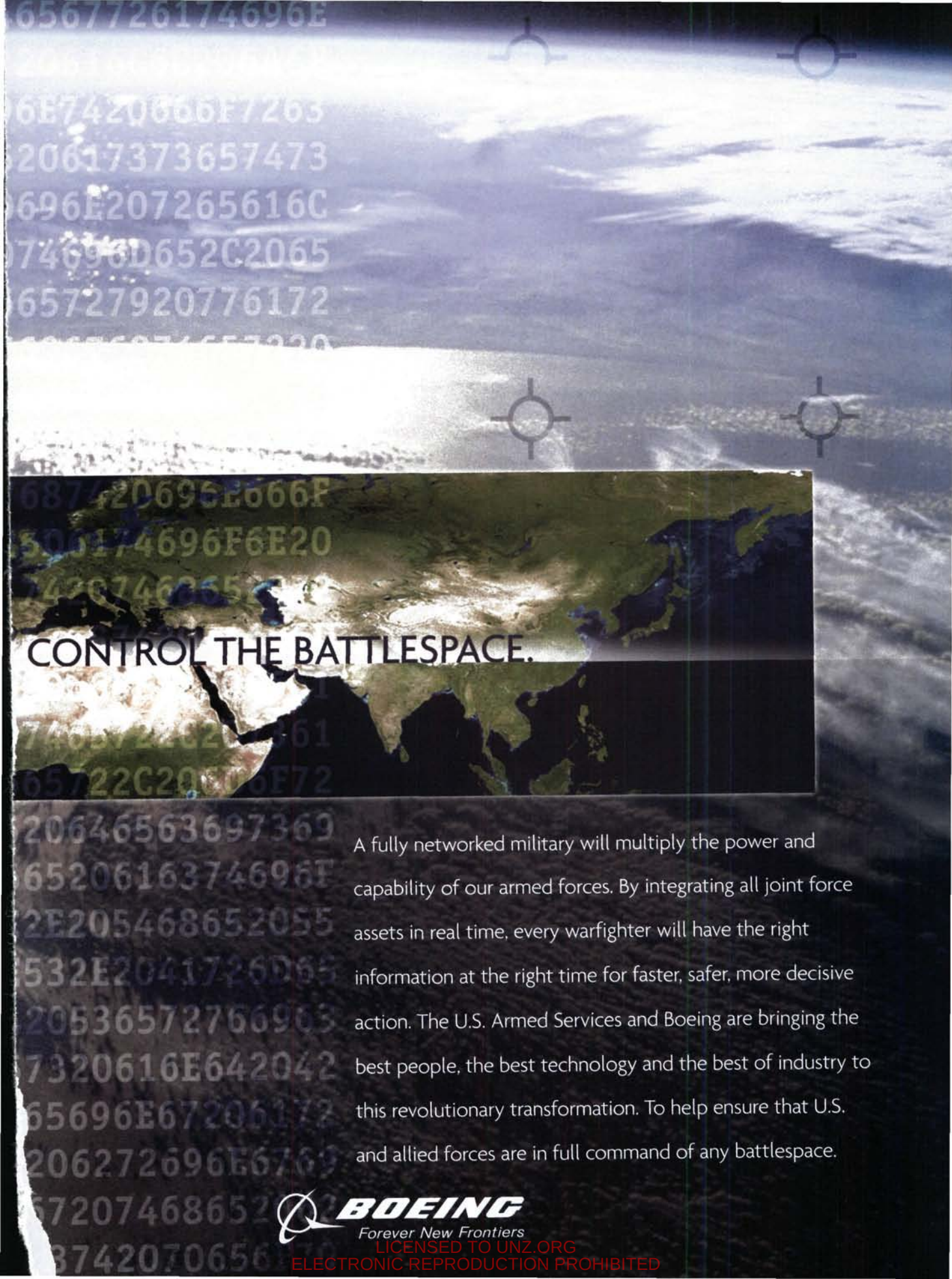

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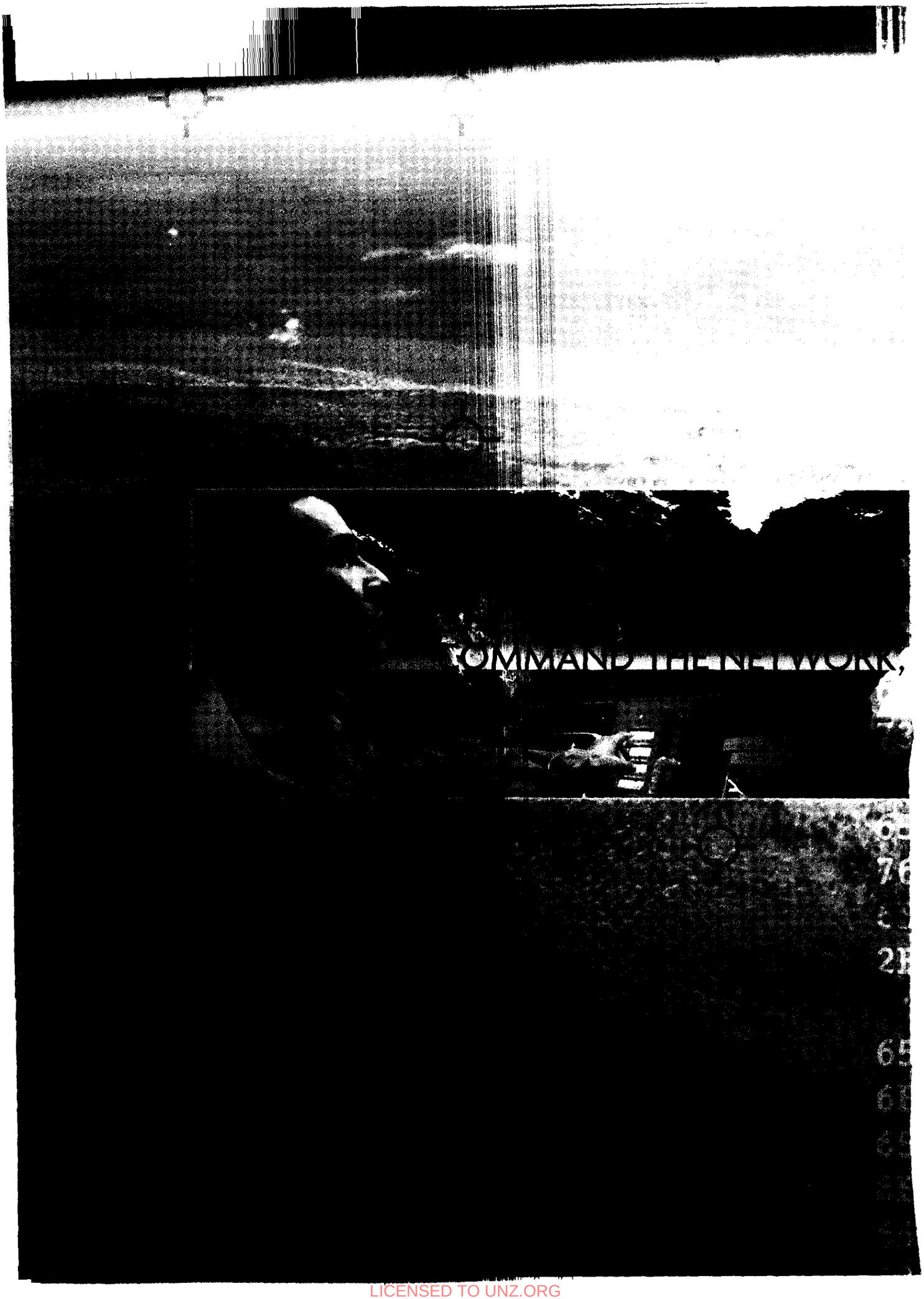

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Contents

March 28, 2005 • Volume 10, Number 26

2 Scrapbook ..... *Associated Press, Joe Klein, and more.*

4 Casual ..... *David Skinner, happy insurgent.*

6 Correspondence ..... *On VDH, Harvard, oil, etc.*

7 Editorial ..... *If You Were a Democrat*

Articles

9 Crying Wolfowitz *The inordinate fear of Bush's choice for the World Bank.* ..... BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

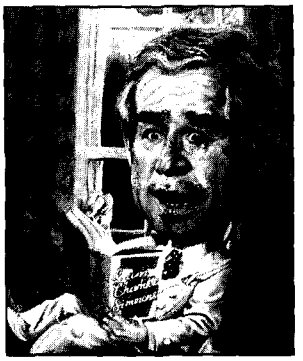
11 Memo to: Karen P. Hughes *Re: The Mission of Public Diplomacy.* ..... BY ROBERT SATLOFF

13 Congress Flexes Its Muscles *Striking out at Major League Baseball.* ..... BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

15 The Bush Factor *What the president has done for his party.* ..... BY FRED BARNES

16 Saving Private Accounts *The missing ingredient in the Social Security debate.* ..... BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY

18 Hating America, Turkish Style *This too shall pass.* ..... BY MUSTAFA AKYOL



Cover: Thomas Fluharty

Features

20 Turn Them Off. Turn Them All Off.
The subversive joys of TV-B-Gone. ..... BY ANDREW FERGUSON

23 Teaching Darwin
Why we're still fighting about biology textbooks. ..... BY PAUL MCHUGH

27 Bush's String of Firecrackers
Time for some democratic noise in East Asia. ..... BY ROSS TERRILL

Books & Arts

31 Our Literary Leaders *Books are at home in the White House.* ..... BY RICHARD NORTON SMITH

37 Unforgivable *"The Upside of Anger" has a downside.* ..... BY JOHN PODHORETZ

39 THE STANDARD READER .... John Adams: Party of One *by James Grant;* The Essential Ronald Reagan *by Lee Edwards.*

40 Parody ..... *Secret memo from Paul Wolfowitz reveals neocon strategy for World Bank.*

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the weekly Standard

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, fourth week in August, and the second week in November) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-902-563-4723 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of THE WEEKLY STANDARD Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2005, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in THE WEEKLY STANDARD may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a trademark of News America Incorporated.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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"Creative" Writing at the Associated Press

The Associated Press, that self-described "backbone of the world's information system," still boasts an impressive 1,700 U.S. newspapers among its clients. But for some time now, it seems, a fair number of those papers have been complaining to The Backbone that the news dispatches sent over its wires just don't cut it anymore. Specifically, as AP managing editor Mike Silverman all but explicitly acknowledged in a client advisory distributed last week, the wire service's customary who-what-when-where-why approach to major "spot stories" increasingly guarantees that those stories will already be stale by the time they reach most readers' doorsteps.

So "in response to what we've been hearing from many editors—that you need to be able to offer your readers something fresh so they will want to pick up the newspaper and read a story, even though the facts have been splashed all over the Web and widely broadcast"—Silverman promised his subscribers something new. "It's called the Optional Lead." And it'll work like this:

AP will henceforth report significant news developments, especially morning-hour events, in two distinct versions. "One will be the traditional 'straight lead' that leads with the main facts of what took place." And the other, at least in its opening sentences, will take "an alternative approach that attempts to draw in the reader through imagery, narrative devices, perspective or other creative means"—though still managing, at the same time, to somehow "present the main facts of what happened in the top few grafs," just like a straight-style write-up.

You are confused, perhaps? Don't be. Mr. Silverman was kind enough to include with his advisory "a couple of recent examples from the wire." Here's one of them:

TRADITIONAL
Mosul, Iraq (AP). A suicide attacker set off a bomb that tore through a funeral tent jammed with Shiite mourners Thursday, splattering blood and body parts over rows of overturned white plastic chairs. The attack, which killed 47 and wounded more than 100, came as Shiite and Kurdish politicians in Baghdad said they overcame a major stumbling block to forming a new coalition government.

OPTIONAL
Mosul, Iraq (AP). Yet again, almost as if scripted, a day of hope for a new, democratic Iraq turned into a day of tears as a bloody insurgent attack undercut a political step forward. On Thursday, just as Shiite and Kurdish politicians in Baghdad were telling reporters that they overcame a major stumbling block to forming a new coalition government, a suicide attacker set off a bomb that tore through a funeral tent jammed with Shiite mourners in the northern city of Mosul.

THE SCRAPBOOK agrees. This is, indeed, a perfectly "creative" approach to hard news wire-copy. *Undisguised bias*! Why didn't somebody think of that before? ♦

Perils of Weekly Journalism

Time magazine columnist Joe Klein, an optional-lead kind of guy if ever there was one, has spent the past couple years of his previously distinguished career muttering dark imprecations against the "neoconservative fantasy" that is Bush administration foreign policy. Nowadays he often sounds like Pat Buchanan, actually: Everything the president has already done overseas is awful (or has come out okay not because of but *despite* Bush's efforts). And everything the president is about to do overseas is even worse.

Indeed, so confident has Klein become in his anti-Bush religion that he now seems prepared to exalt its peculiar truths even over those most sacred teachings of the Periodical Gods. THE SCRAPBOOK is a humbler wretch, so much so that he trembles merely to mention the eternal commandment he has in mind. Nevertheless, here goes: *Thou shalt not write thy column "into the news,"* sayeth the Lord. Or, translated into the vulgate: Whatever you do, don't publish a piece on Sunday that's gonna stay out on the newsstands until next Saturday if there's a pretty good chance something will happen *tomorrow* that makes you look like an absolute jackass.

But, forsooth! Brother Joseph has given himself up to sin, most recently in a *Time* essay posted on that magazine's website March 13. We join said essay just as Mr. Klein is dumping on the president for having announced, "the American people are on your side. The momentum of freedom is on your side, and freedom will prevail in Lebanon."

> As the president delivered these remarks, however, the people of Lebanon had a message for him: half a million of them—far more than had attended any pro-democracy rally—had been gathered in the streets of Beirut by the terrorist-military-civic group Hezbollah. . . . In fact, a month after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, the Lebanese anti-Syrian opposition is

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in disarray. . . . And so the Bush administration finds its hopes for democracy in Lebanon almost completely dependent on the good faith of Hezbollah . . . a group traditionally more interested in lobbing Katyusha rockets into Israel than in organizing municipal elections.

Oops.

For a somewhat more traditional, straight-lead account of the situation in Lebanon, let's turn to CNN's Anderson Cooper, reporting live from Beirut barely 24 hours after Joe Klein's latest little hissy fit was sent around the globe. It seems that the largest popular demonstration in the modern history of the Middle East is just wrapping up there:

COOPER: It was a day to remember in once-battered Beirut. Martyrs' Square, a killing zone in the civil war, was awash with flags and hopes for freedom. Walking in the swirling sea of protesters, it was easy to forget where you were, forget this is a country, a region where speaking out could get you killed.

CROWD: Syria out! Syria out!

COOPER: Unlike many places in the Middle East, people want to be on camera here. . . . It's a new-found freedom and they want to make the most of it. It wasn't just the assassination of the former prime minister, Hariri, which caused these demonstrations. That was the catalyst. But everyone here will tell you they watched the elections in Iraq, they watched the elections in Afghanistan, and they said to themselves and to each other, why can't we have that here?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: God bless George Bush! God bless USA!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I love the people of America one by one!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We love USA!

These people must not have read Joe Klein. ♦

Guy Stuff

An international team of 250 scientists, conducting research first reported last Thursday in the British journal *Nature*, has completed a full map of the X or "female" chromosome which helps determine sex in human beings. The researchers found much greater genetic variation between the sexes than they had expected. All told, as the *Los Angeles Times* described the team's conclusions, "men and women may differ by as much as 2 percent of their entire genetic inheritance, greater than the hereditary gap between humankind and its closest relative—the chimpanzee." Huntington Willard of Duke University, one of the key researchers participating in this latest effort, told the *Chicago Tribune* that by now "any of us over the age of two realizes there are plenty of differences between males and females that are characteristic of the two sexes."

Alas, however, scientists have yet to discover an explanation for the inability of Harvard University faculty members to discuss this subject like grownups. ♦

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Casual

WANNABE-CONS

In defeat, envy. Or so it goes with liberals, who lately seem to covet every asset of the conservative movement, from Rush Limbaugh to, I recently learned, right-wing student publications.

David Halperin of the Center for American Progress, which is looking to fund lefty journalism on campus, complained to the *Washington Post* that conservative pundits have an "insurgency mentality, even though they run the world." And this mentality, Halperin believes, can be traced to formative experiences like writing for the *Dartmouth Review*.

Fair enough. But more than money, young liberals who want to be insurgents need a campus establishment with a right-wing, herd mentality to rise against. This would include boorishly pro-American professors and ultra-conservative students. Only then would these future Eric Altermans feel like outsiders on campus and rightly deem it cool to afflict faculty and discomfit classmates.

Here, I speak from experience.

Before college, I didn't even know what a conservative was. Animal-rights activists, environmentalists, Communists—these I knew. The wannabes were my classmates at an artsy public school in Manhattan, and often enough their parents were the real thing. When politics wasn't the topic at their kitchen tables, I learned about a subject much dearer to my heart—becoming an artist, which in their telling sounded like becoming a professional grant applicant.

Either way, I had to go to college. My mother insisted. And at a small liberal arts school in the cornfields of Ohio, I encountered campus liberalism in all its socially regulatory, anti-intellectual, dour piety. Nearby Antioch College had instituted a system of consent checks for frisky males. On our campus, few crimes compared to promoting stereotypes, except that of the affluent white male. The cognoscenti spelled women "wymmyn" (perhaps they still do at Harvard) and proudly sermonized on the distinction between the empowering term "person of color" and the racist "colored person."

This tangle of dopey prohibitions was not for me. Among other problems, political correctness was pathologically un-fun, and for amusement I was absolutely starved. The only pleasure of an intellectual sort to be had outside a few classrooms seemed to be over at the conservative magazine, the *Kenyon Observer*. It ran an exposé of the feminist biology class in which the few male students allowed to participate had to sit in the front row of the auditorium so no female student would be looked down on by a male.

The frat boys running the *Observer* when I first arrived seemed rich; they were definitely smart; and their magazine had an aristocratic flavor. I remember visiting one in his dorm room and hearing John Coltrane on a pricey-looking stereo, as I admired a handsome hardcover set of Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. In any other student's room you'd find the Indigo Girls playing and Carol Gilligan brooding in the bookcase.

Sadly, the *Observer's* intellectual élan diminished with my own rise as a writer and editor. Though we never stooped as low as the paper from another school that ranked the hottest girls on campus, our rhetoric seldom ascended above snarky ridicule.

After the multicultural arts journal whose budget dwarfed our own came out, we went to town in an editorial about the pages they'd left blank for lack of contributions. When one of our writers told me the school's president and provost had given him nearly identical interviews, I made him write it up like this:

> President Jordan warmly greeted me when I came by to ask about the true meaning of the liberal arts education, referred me to the introductory essay in the course catalog, and then bid me good day. Later that week, Provost Smith also greeted me warmly when I came by to ask him about the true meaning of the liberal arts education, before referring me to the introduction of the course catalog, and finally bidding me good day.

No passage in the magazine that year so infuriated the school brass.

A recent dinner for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Collegiate Network, which helped fund the *Observer* and many other right-wing campus mags, brought back these memories. What a night! I finally met Kenyon legends and *Observer* founders Alex Novak, now at Regnery, and David Horner, today a Richmond lawyer. On stage, John Podhoretz and Tod Lindberg finished each other's sentences and squabbled about the early days of the University of Chicago's conservative mag. The crowd of capital bigshots and campus little shots loved it.

It captured the fun we had, we undergrads, who looked for trouble, and enjoyed ourselves at liberals' expense. The left, if I may say so, has every reason to be envious.

DAVID SKINNER

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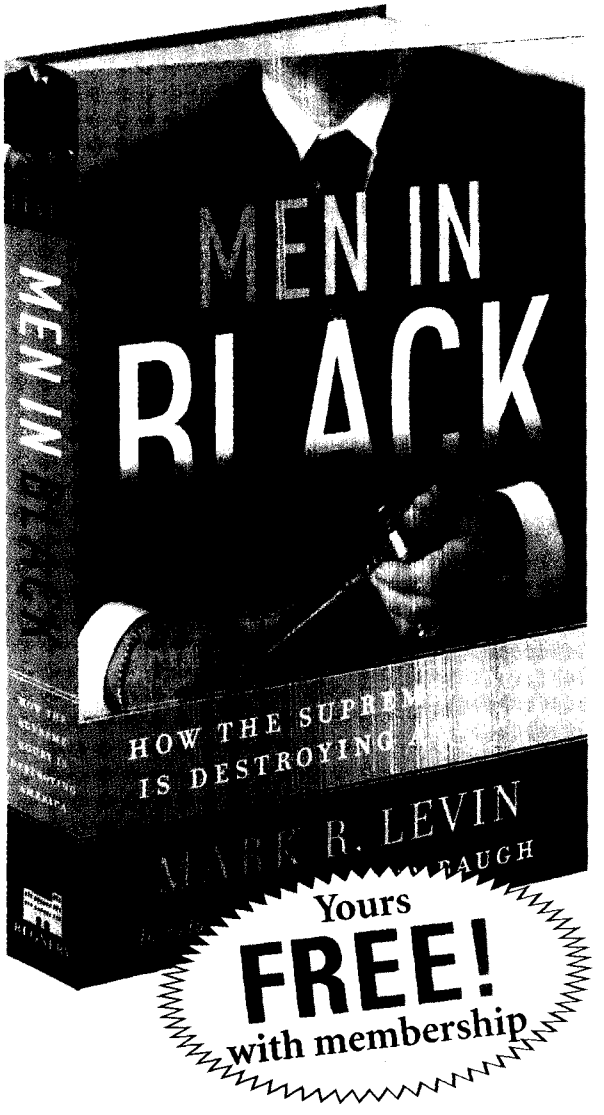
They've done more harm to America than Dan Rather, Barbra Streisand, Martin Sheen, John Kerry and both Clintons combined...



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—Sean Hannity, nationally syndicated talk show host and co-host of the FOX News Channel's *Hannity & Colmes*

From same-sex marriage, illegal immigration, and economic socialism to partial-birth abortion, political speech, and terrorists' "rights," judges have abused their constitutional mandate by imposing their personal prejudices and beliefs on the rest of society. No radical political movement has been more effective in undermining our system of government than the judiciary. And we, the people, need not stand for it.

In the *New York Times* bestseller, *Men in Black*, radio talk show host and legal scholar Mark R. Levin dissects the judicial tyranny that is robbing us of our freedoms and stuffing the ballot box in favor of liberal policies.

If you've ever wondered why — no matter who holds political power — American society always seems to drift to the left, Mark Levin has the answer: the black-robed justices of the Supreme Court, subverting democracy in favor of their own liberal agenda.

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Correspondence

The Citizen-Farmer

Jonathan Kay's essay on Victor Davis Hanson ("The Sage of Fresno," March 14) tells a great story. It was very interesting to read how an unpretentious man manages to see the value in respecting past virtues the way others see the chance to exploit future opportunities. Hanson reminds us that where we go in life is often not as important as where we came from. Our country could learn a lot from this simple, yet brilliant, man, if only we cared enough.

Gerard C. Renaud
Danielson, CT

I must admit to feeling a strong sense of déjà vu while reading Jonathan Kay's article on Victor Davis Hanson. Growing up in rural Illinois, I too have seen the flight from unsustainable family farms and urban metastases (such as strip malls and apartment complexes).

Hanson suffers the struggle of the idealist railing at both the relativist and the death of our great melting pot. He weathers it well and fights the good fight. Hanson longs for the simpler times when there were boundaries on cultural and moral issues. Now we need a scorecard to track the latest constitutional revision of Justice Kennedy.

Richard Eaton
Herrin, IL

The Masculine Feminist

Harvey Mansfield does a masterful job of exposing feminists' inconsistencies and questionable tactics ("Fear and Intimidation at Harvard," March 7). For some, these tactics just become automatic. I once taught a college course using a text whose author insisted on putting "they" and "their" in place of singular impersonal pronouns because he regarded the use of the masculine pronoun in impersonal contexts as "pernicious."

Accordingly, he used the plural pronoun throughout his text—even when strict grammar rules required a singular—as if all uses of the masculine pronoun in impersonal contexts were wicked, and the simple expedient of alternating "he" and "his" with "she" and "hers" did not exist.

Steven M. Sanders
Franklin, MA

The Hard Cell

Irwin M. Stelzer's "The Axis of Oil" (Feb. 7) nicely illuminates the Chinese and Russian attempts to obtain and control much of the world's petroleum supply.

But could we not out-maneuver these countries by using our native ingenuity and technical know-how? We have presently in production viable fuel-cell autos—and, according to *Scientific American*, some 60 DaimlerChrysler hydrogen vehicles are ready for testing worldwide. Honda, Ford, and many other carmakers are planning to have such vehicles on our highways soon. As Stelzer is aware, these vehicles use no gasoline.

If we are really serious about breaking the petroleum stranglehold other countries have on us, President Bush could create a federal Hydrogen Fuel Cell Commission. Its major purpose would be to appropriate funds to (1) assist car companies in solving remaining technical problems, and (2) simultaneously establish an adequate number of hydrogen fuel stations in the United States to service these vehicles. Most important, this commission should have the power to really push fuel-cell development. With action we would shortly be in a position to turn the tables on the oil-rich countries we have to deal with at present.

I believe the above could be accomplished within ten years. And at more than $50 per barrel of oil, isn't it time we attacked a problem that could cause great damage to our economy?

C.K. O'Meara
Green Valley, AZ

Dirty Money

What moral principle induced The Weekly Standard to run a full-page ad by NARAL Pro-Choice America (Feb. 28)? Was it the emperor Vespasian's thought, *pecunia non olet*, ("money doesn't stink")? The lack of available birth control cannot explain one million-plus abortions every year. Mass resort to abortion is the symptom of a widespread moral disorder—and more contraceptives will do little to correct it.

Nancy Keenan at least has the kindness to call her opponents pro-life, but her side is "pro-choice" only with respect to the choice to kill the unborn. Her proposal is on the level of proposing to end racism by sending all Americans of African ancestry back to Africa.

Not all money stinks, but NARAL money does. Shame on The Weekly Standard for taking it.

Harold O.J. Brown
Charlotte, NC

• • •

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If You Were a Democrat

If you were a Senate Democrat, you'd filibuster those Bush judges. Yes, you would. When it came time to vote on a targeted nominee in this new Congress, you'd know the deal. You'd know that Republicans would move for cloture to limit debate, and that if they succeeded, the nominee would get an up-or-down vote. But you'd also know that, under those very useful Senate rules, they would need 60 votes to prevail, and that because the Republicans number just 55, your side would win so long as at least 41 of you hung together.

Yes, if you were a Democrat, you'd be ready to say no and no and no again on those cloture petitions. You'd filibuster the Bush nominees because you'd know that if they were actually voted on, they'd be confirmed. Each and every one of them, by majorities in the mid-to-high 50s. And then for decades those nominees would sit on the circuit courts of appeal, which, because they have the last word on all but the handful of cases that go up to the Supreme Court, are very important indeed. If those judges performed as advertised, they would disdain the living, evolving Constitution that you so admire and would decide cases in the manner of Scalia or Thomas, Bush's favorite jurists, a horrible prospect.

Of course, if you were a Democrat (and even if you were a Republican), you'd also know that some judges don't perform as advertised and that some have demonstrated an unusual capacity to "grow in office"—Washington shorthand for judges who grow less conservative. And you'd know that because they have that capacity, some Bush judges might turn out to be like, say, Souter or Kennedy, a pleasant surprise for your party. But as a Democrat, you'd know that you couldn't trust this president to put up too many Souters and Kennedys, and that you'd better be ready to say no whenever your leaders gave the signal—following due consultation, of course, with People For the American Way and the rest of the activist groups to whom your caucus has outsourced its critical thinking on all things judicial. As a Democrat, you'd know that your filibusters of circuit nominees would warm you up for the big game—the filibustering of Bush's Supreme Court picks.

If you were a Democrat, you'd know better about a lot of things said on your side. Of course you would. You'd know Schumer was out of his depth when he justified filibustering nominees by citing Madison's description of the Senate as a "cooling saucer," because you'd know (wouldn't you?) that the image came not from Madison but Washington, and that as he used it, it had nothing to do with filibusters, the first one of which took place only in the 1820s, and to stymie not judicial nominations, but legislation.

You'd know that the great constitutionalist Robert Byrd was speaking nonsense when he said that the Senate was "rejecting" Bush judges, because you'd know, wouldn't you, that the Senate was doing no such thing, but that a subset of the Senate, a minority made up exclusively of you and your Democratic colleagues, was engaged in a blocking action designed to prevent an up-or-down vote that, were it held, would invariably result in approval, not rejection.

And block you would, over and over again, just as you did during the last session, when you and your brilliant colleagues prevented votes on no fewer than 10 nominees. You'd keep on with this even though you'd know that the road you and Bobby and Chuck and Ted and Hillary and John decided to go down two years ago when you became the minority party had never been taken before. That is, you'd know that no Senate minority ever before had made routine use of the filibuster to block judicial nominees who would have enjoyed majority Senate support.

And you'd know that the Republicans were right when they insisted on an up-or-down vote, and that the parliamentary procedures they were contemplating using to exempt judicial nominations from the filibuster, a Senate rule that the Senate may change as it wishes, were once used by Byrd himself when he was majority leader to establish Senate precedents designed to stop filibusters and other delaying tactics. Indeed, you'd know that the record was filled with all kinds of statements by Byrd and other Democrats quite at odds with their current ones. You'd know that Ted once got up and said, "The filibuster has been the shame of the Senate and the last resort of special interest groups," and "the Senate should operate under the principle of majority rule, except as the Constitution otherwise provides," and "a simple majority is entitled to change

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the Senate rules." You'd applaud the hypocrisy but you might also applaud obviously sincere confessions, like Barbara Boxer's, who said just this week at *MoveOn.org*'s "Rally for Fair Judges" that "I thought I knew everything" back when Democrats controlled the Senate and she opposed the filibuster, but "I was wrong . . . totally wrong."

If you were a Democrat, you wouldn't worry if Frist tried to end the filibuster for judges. You wouldn't worry if you and your colleagues responded to such an effort by shutting down the Senate. Actually, you'd be ready to blow the place up. Because you'd know nothing was more important than blocking votes on Bush's nominees, even though a leading legal scholar who advises Democrats says that the Bush judges so far are proving no different, in terms of judging, than the judges sponsored by Reagan and Bush's father.

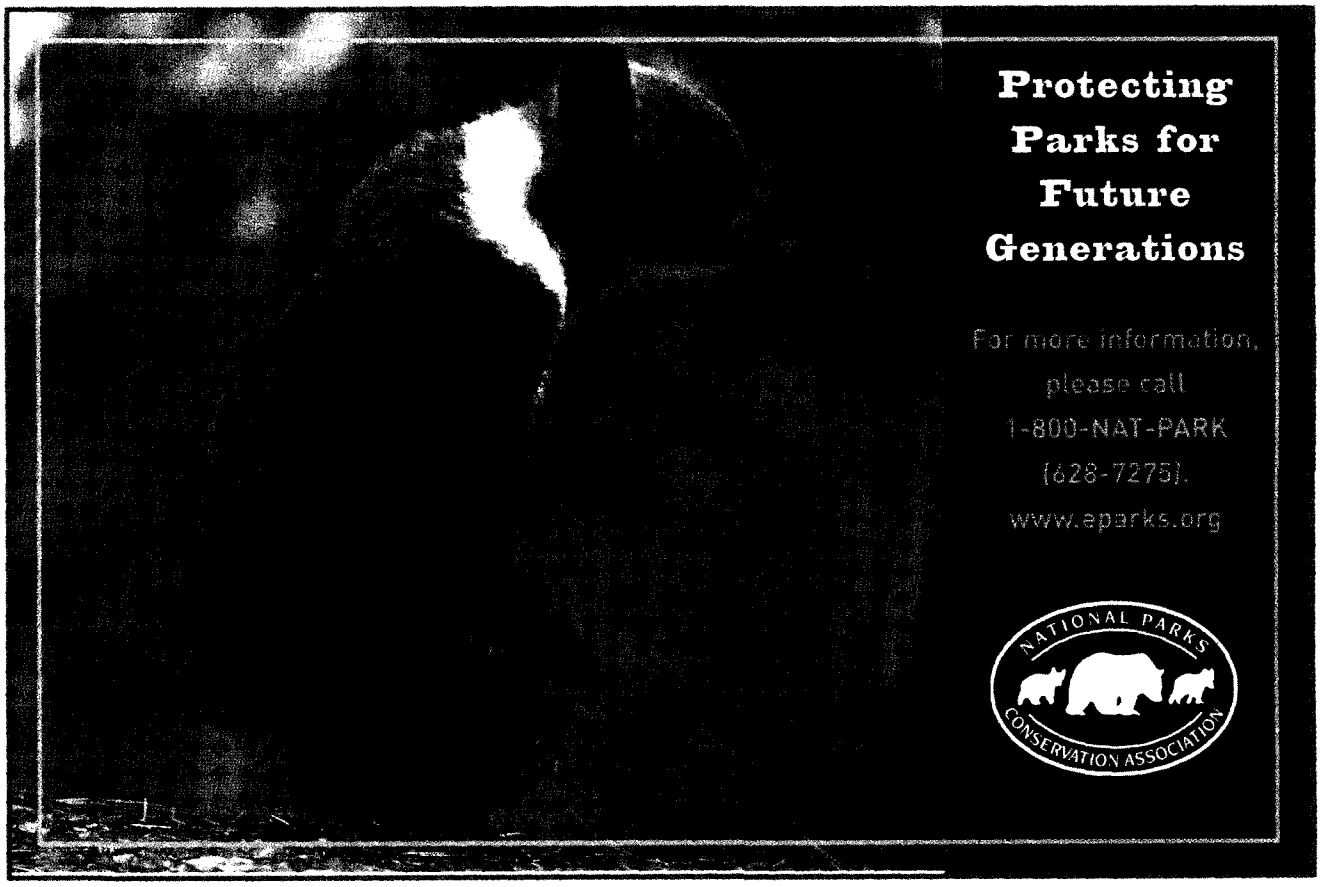
If you were a Democrat, you'd not worry about your party's rejection of the practice of so many years (1791 to 2002) whereby a simple majority was all that was necessary to confirm a judge. You'd not worry that your party had managed to change the vote needed for the confirmation of a judge from a simple majority to a three-fifths supermajority, and in fact you'd think Boxer had nailed it when she said—over there at the *MoveOn.org* rally—that "for such a super-important position there ought to be a super vote."

You'd not worry that in 2006 or 2008 your party might lose Senate seats as Tom Daschle lost his last fall partly on account of its unprecedented filibustering ways. You'd not worry that some of the five Democrats from red states whose seats are up in 2006 might lose because of this issue. And you'd not worry that a Republican minority might someday decide to follow your example and routinely filibuster a Democratic president's judicial nominees. Certainly you'd not worry, nor would constitutionalist Byrd, that the filibuster (to quote the legal scholar Michael Gerhardt) "is problematic because it creates a presumption against confirmation, shifts the balance of power to the Senate and enhances the power of the special interests."

You'd not worry about those things because you'd agree that nothing matters as much as preventing votes on Bush's nominees. You'd know that because the special interests—er, your "advisers," the folks over at People For the American Way, NARAL, the ACLU, and, fresh off their great success in the 2004 campaign, *MoveOn.org* told you so. You'd know them, if you were a Democrat, and, more important, they'd know you, and they'd know you'd be afraid of getting crosswise with them and with the Democratic base they claim to represent.

If you were a Senate Democrat, then, you'd be ready to vote no and no and no again. Deep down, though, you'd also know that your party had fallen off its rocker. You'd know that the filibustering strategy was stupid and unwise, bad for the Senate, bad for the presidency, bad for the courts—and bad for the Democratic party. And you'd give it up. If you were a smart Democrat.

—Terry Eastland, for the Editors



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Crying Wolfowitz

The inordinate fear of Bush's choice for the World Bank. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

ON MARCH 2, 2005, Al Kamen, who writes the scoop-heavy "Inside the Loop" column in the *Washington Post*, addressed the "rumors" and "news reports" that Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz would soon be put forward by George W. Bush as president of the World Bank.

"No way that was going to happen," Kamen wrote. "(The notion was too much even for this column.)"

Two weeks later to the day, President Bush posed for pictures in the Oval Office with a smiling Wolfowitz, newly named to serve as president of the World Bank. Bush called Wolfowitz "a compassionate, decent man who will do a fine job at the World Bank. That's why I put him up."

And there it was. Nothing complicated.

European newspapers were filled with angry reaction to the choice. A headline in the *Washington Post* read: "Nomination Shocks, Worries Europeans." The article quoted one Michael Cox, a despairing professor of international relations at the London School of Economics: "We were led to believe that the neoconservatives were losing ground. But clearly the revolution is alive and well."

Revolution or not, the selection was seen as worrisome in Paris. An Agence France-Presse news story described European objections to Wolfowitz. "He is also held in suspicion as a central figure in the U.S. neoconservative movement, which would like to see the U.S. vision of liberal democracy and free-market economics take root around the world."

Much of the European caricature of Wolfowitz is tripe. They say he is a warmonger (he is not) and a unilateralist (he is not) and a tool of the Likud party in Israel (he is often quite skeptical of Ariel Sharon and advocated giving the Palestinians a state when that view was considered radical). But the AFP gets it right. Wolfowitz, like the president who appointed him, is an unapologetic proponent of "liberal democracy and free-market economics," and he would most certainly like to see both "take root around the world." (That so many Europeans apparently find this objectionable says far more about them than it does about Wolfowitz.)

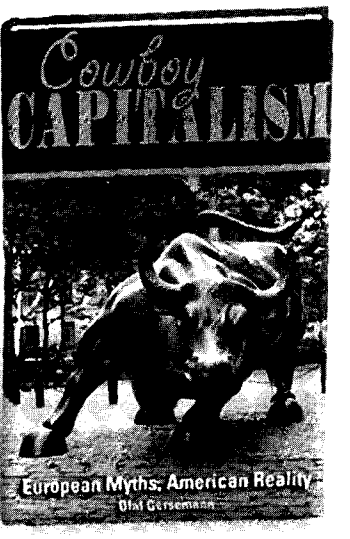
Other critics suggest that Wolfowitz will have to curb his appetite for democratization in favor of an emphasis on economic liberalization—that his new job will be something of a departure for a man who for decades has been a strong proponent of democratization. It's a distinction Wolfowitz rejects. "I believe as a general tendency that economic development and political development support each other," he said in an interview Friday. "It's easier to support democratic institutions when economies are free, but I don't buy the Fareed Zakaria idea that poor people can't support democracies. The Indonesians are proving him wrong right now."

If Wolfowitz's views are unpopular in European liberal democracies, they have supporters in countries that aspire to become liberal democracies. Take Lebanon. Wolfowitz has spent much time lately visiting with Lebanese leaders and reformers in the United States. His week began with a memorial service to honor former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri at Georgetown University. (James Wolfensohn, the current World Bank president, was seated next to him dur-

Stephen F. Hayes is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

A real treasure trove of thoughtful analysis.

— Milton Friedman



Gersemann combines the accuracy and incisiveness of a scholar with the verve and wit of the best kind of journalist. His readers will be fascinated from the beginning and enlightened by the end.

— Steven Landsburg,
author of *The Armchair Economist*

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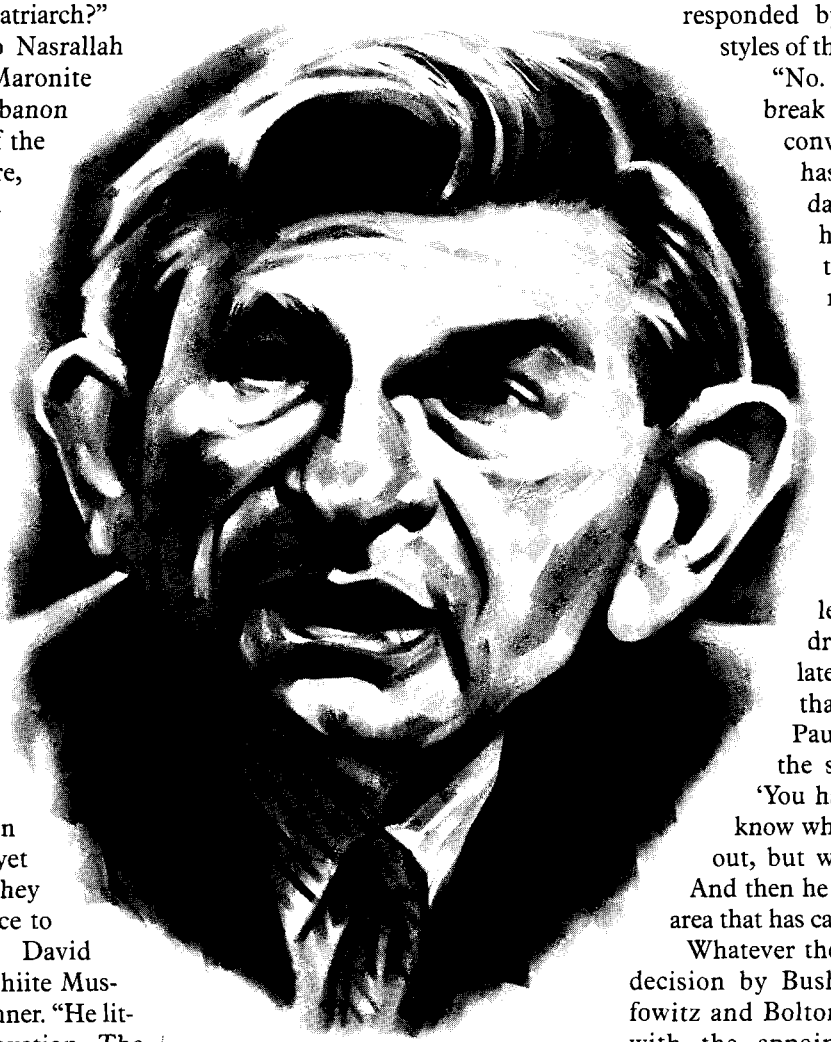
ing the service. They chatted briefly but did not discuss Wolfowitz's pending appointment, then still four days off.) According to several people at the service, a throng of Lebanese Christians (and some Muslims) gathered around Wolfowitz to thank him for pushing reform in the Middle East. The scene caused Farid Abboud, the Syrian-backed Lebanese ambassador to the United States, to mutter, "Who does he think he is, the patriarch?"

It was a reference to Nasrallah Sfeir, leader of the Maronite Catholic Church in Lebanon and a vocal opponent of the Syrian occupation there, who was in Washington for meetings with President Bush and other top administration officials, including Wolfowitz.

Wolfowitz attended a dinner for Sfeir at the Fairmont Hotel on Tuesday night, the day before the White House announced his candidacy for the World Bank job. Some 600 Lebanese Americans were in attendance, both Christians and Muslims. When Wolfowitz entered the ballroom, the crowd erupted in applause. He had not yet been introduced. "They hadn't even had a chance to say his name," says David Ramadan, a Lebanese Shiite Muslim who attended the dinner. "He literally got a standing ovation. The screams were louder even than the ones for the patriarch."

Ramadan believes the reception for Wolfowitz would have been the same among the pro-democracy protesters in Beirut. "The people in that room were representative of those 1.8 million people. It's the start of an Arab revolution, and a huge part of that is American foreign policy. And anyone who knows anything about American foreign policy appreciates the role of Paul Wolfowitz. And those who don't appreciate it—it's pure ignorance."

Shortly after the White House announcement, I called Senator Joe Biden, a leading voice for Democrats on foreign policy. The job does not require Senate confirmation, but Biden is often a barometer of liberal internationalist opinion. When I asked him what he thought of the pick, Biden answered with one word. "Solid." After a pause, he elaborated.



Paul Wolfowitz

"Paul is a brilliant guy and a serious person. My differences with Paul relate to his assessment of what we would have to face in Iraq after the war." Despite the knee-jerk opposition to Wolfowitz from some European intellectuals and politicians, Biden thinks Wolfowitz will get a fair hearing. "I've had a lot of talks about Paul in European capitals. They know him as a serious intellectual and an engine of change."

I asked Biden if he understood the Wolfowitz nomination—and the nomination of John Bolton as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations the previous week—to be an attempt by the Bush administration to use the second term to repair and remake broken international institutions. He responded by contrasting the styles of the two men.

"No. I think John will break the U.N. John has convinced me that he has an absolute disdain for the U.N. If he has moved from that position, I'm not aware of it. If he now thinks the U.N. could be a strong, useful institution—that's an epiphany for him. Paul is a much more sober, realistic guy. He is much less ideologically driven about multilateral institutions—if that makes sense. Paul reminds me of the surgeon who says, 'You have cancer. I don't know whether we can cut it out, but we're going to try.' And then he focuses on just the area that has cancer."

Whatever their differences, the decision by Bush to elevate Wolfowitz and Bolton—taken together with the appointment of Karen Hughes last week as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy—clearly demonstrates the Bush administration's commitment to the ideals Bush laid out in his second inaugural address. It should confirm the "suspicions" of Europeans that not just neoconservatives but Bush himself "would like to see the U.S. vision of liberal democracy and free-market economics take root around the world." ♦

Illustration by Stanley Miller

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Memo to: Karen P. Hughes

Re: The Mission of Public Diplomacy

BY ROBERT SATLOFF

CONGRATULATIONS on your nomination as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy. Though this is a third-level State Department appointment, with an office about a half-mile away from your former prime spot in the West Wing of the White House, it is actually one of the most important jobs in the U.S. government. Like the generals in charge of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the intelligence chiefs running the global war on terror, you will now be in charge of fighting the "battle of ideas."

The battle of ideas is the ideological component of the war on terror. As the 9/11 Commission found, America's real enemy is not terrorism, which is just a tactic. Rather, our enemies are the adherents of an ideology, radical Islamist extremism. On that fateful September morning in 2001, our enemies employed box-cutters and 747s to achieve their objectives; on different days and in different places, they employ less gruesome tactics to the same sinister ends. The Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security have hundreds of thousands of people fighting the terrorists. Your lonely job is to combat their ideology.

The main theater of conflict is abroad, in Arab and other Muslim societies. That is where Islamist extremists are trying to win control of the social, economic, cultural, and eventually the political lives of countries around the world. But distance from American shores does not make the battle less relevant to American lives.

The question of whether Islamist extremism finds fertile ground in these countries is as fateful as whether states chose to be Communist or free during the Cold War. Although this is, at its core, a fight among Muslims, the United States is a central player; American values, policies, and interests are at stake as well. Your mission is to find ways to identify, nurture, and support Muslim allies in this war. If they win, we win; if they lose, we lose.

Banish the terms "Arab world" and "Muslim world" from America's diplomatic lexicon; be as country-specific as possible, in both word and deed.

This is a hopeful moment in the battle of ideas. In Beirut, Cairo, and elsewhere, people yearning for freedom are challenging the unholy nexus of fear that has made secular authoritarian regimes and radical Muslim activists strange allies over the past two decades. The Bush administration has done an excellent job of leveraging transformative events—the Iraqi election, Arafat's death, etc.—into fulcrums of positive change. Our traditional diplomacy seems right on track.

But since 9/11, our public diplomacy has failed to keep pace. Most critics focus on the paltry resources directed to this task. That obscures the real problem, which has been a vacuous strategy and the absence of leadership. Your nomination, however, raises the prospect of getting it right. You come to the job with two vital qualifications: You are personally close to the president and, by all accounts, you actually support his policies, especially in the Middle East.

After living in an Arab capital for most of the post-9/11 period, and seeing our public-diplomacy effort in action in countries around the Middle East, I humbly offer this series of do's and don'ts:

- Focus on mission, not message: Your job is not to win friends for America. Your job is to support Muslims committed to the political, social, and cultural battle against Islamist extremism and to advance the cause of freedom within Muslim societies. If we do that properly, friendships will follow.
- Fight to win: Defeating Islamist extremism is not some policy fad, it's a war. We should wage this battle by supporting our friends, isolating our critics, and punishing our adversaries. And remember—our allies are not an abstraction; they are a hardy band of real-life, flesh-and-blood democrats. In the Middle East, we need more democrats, not just more democracy.
- Compete for the minds of young Muslims. Squeeze every dollar you can find into promoting education, especially English-language education. As the president said, the ideological war is a generational fight, and education is our most effective strategic weapon. At the moment, however, the Islamists are winning this fight.
- Banish the terms "Arab world" and "Muslim world" from America's diplomatic lexicon; be as country-specific as possible, in both word and deed. Radical Islamists want to erase borders and create a supranational world where the lines of demarcation run between the "house of Islam" and the "house of war." Don't cede the

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Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute, is the author of The Battle of Ideas in the War on Terror: Essays on U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East *(2004).*

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battlefield to them without a fight.

• Don't be condescending or bashful. Talk to Muslims as you would have them talk to you—maturely, candidly, openly. Many may oppose certain U.S. policies—such as the war in Iraq or our support of Israel—but that's okay. We should be ready to listen to complaints about U.S. policies, engage in continual dialogue, and "agree to disagree" in order to join forces in an anti-extremist coalition. Whether they are orthodox, pious, lapsed, or secular Muslims, if they are willing to serve on the front line in the struggle against radical Islam, America should be ready to hear them out.

• Never read polls: If you judge your success by America's poll numbers, you will fail—both in your mission and your job. In the Middle East, polls tend to distort and exaggerate; public opinion is episodic and driven by news cycles; and popular attitudes seem to have little impact on people's behavior. In your old job, polls may have been essential; in this job, they are toxic.

• Don't try to accommodate, co-opt, or "dialogue" with Islamists. They are much better at this game than we are and, in the process, we confuse and demoralize our allies. And don't try to tell Muslims how to be "good Muslims" or suggest that America knows what is "true Islam." Focus on what we really know something about, i.e., running a reasonably well-functioning democracy for 229 years.

Here are two last pieces of advice.

First, recognize from your first day on the job that you sit in a building whose mission can run counter to yours. While your task is to reach out to foreign publics, the State Department is set up to engage with foreign governments. Even if your fellow tenants of the seventh floor have all the right intentions—which certainly seems the case—you need to ready yourself to do battle with a bureaucracy hard-wired for quiet, capital-to-capital diplomacy. At best, you can trigger some creative tension with regional bureaus; at worst, you will go hat-in-hand to them for personnel, resources, and access.

Karen Hughes

Illustration by Earl Kelleny

Your ties to the president will be helpful but they won't be enough. You need to be empowered—by him and by the secretary of state—to be in charge of our nation's strategic communications. You should be prepared to use that power to improve the entire range of outreach to Arab and Muslim publics, using all media at our disposal, from the Internet to textbooks. This may require White House commitment to legislative reforms and additional appropriations to improve America's capacity to fight the ideological battle properly and successfully.

Second, and this may be the toughest part—do no harm. Since 9/11, dozens of smart, well-meaning people have taken a look at America's public diplomacy problems; some of the ideas they have come up with are clever and creative; others run the gamut from silly and stupid to downright masochistic. Put every suggestion to this simple test: If it were implemented, would radical Islamists be better off or worse off? You would be surprised how many reasonable-sounding proposals fail this test.

Finally, if the president's second term is about "legacy," then you are in the right job. So far, the president will be remembered for having met the challenge of 9/11 with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However successful those two democratic experiments may turn out, their legacy pales beside the current opportunity—to define the second Bush administration as the one that turned the tide against the global ideological threat of radical Islam, thereby giving strength and succor to democrats in every Muslim country. Now, that's something worth chiseling into granite. ♦

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Congress Flexes Its Muscles

Striking out at Major League Baseball.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Rayburn House Office Building, March 17

SHHHH! QUIET! It's time to listen to Tom Davis on steroids, but you can hardly hear him talk over the din of whirring cameras and gabbing reporters. Davis is a Republican congressman from Virginia and the chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform. It is morning. His face is ruddy. There are bags under his eyes. But his voice is firm and his purpose is clear, and pretty soon the chamber settles down. "Today," Davis begins, "evidence strongly suggests that steroid use among teenagers—especially aspiring athletes—is a large and growing problem." The kids are taking cues from the pros: A "cloud hovers" over Major League Baseball, he explains—the cloud of steroid abuse. That's why he has called us all to today's hearing, "a public discussion of the issues" featuring "witnesses testifying under oath." It's all meant to provide a "glimpse of sunlight" in an otherwise dreary doping scandal.

Davis's hearing will also provide more than a glimpse of Curt Schilling, the Boston Red Sox's ace pitcher, Frank Thomas, the Chicago White Sox's designated hitter (via satellite), Baltimore Oriole Rafael Palmeiro, Sammy Sosa, another Baltimore Oriole, and retired St. Louis Cardinal Mark McGwire. The men who make up this constellation of baseball stars have a lot in common. They are all famous. They are all here because they've been issued subpoenas. They are all here, too, because they are mentioned in a book written by another star witness, former ballplayer Jose Canseco.

The book is called *Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big*, and in it Canseco says that Palmeiro, Sosa, and McGwire took steroids in the 1990s. Currently *Juiced* is number three on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Since it was released in early February, Canseco's book has been the focus of extensive media coverage, and representatives of the media are here today too—fistfuls of them. They squawk into cell phones and look in vain for the baseball superstars. They will have to wait.

Chairman Davis warns us that today isn't just about the ballplayers. Today is about the children. So Davis invited a whopping 19 witnesses to testify before the committee, in four expert panels. The all-stars won't show up until panel three. Allan "Bud" Selig, Major League Baseball's commissioner, is scheduled to testify in panel four, but he has to spend the entire day in the hearing room as the congressmen beat up on him, his star players, and his steroid policy. It's grueling. Sometimes it's gruesome. When I catch a glimpse of Selig toward the end of the day, he is slumped in his chair, a pitiful furrowed brow lost in a rumpled suit.

The morning's first witness is Kentucky senator Jim Bunning. Like Davis, Bunning is a Republican, but unlike Davis, Bunning has played in the major leagues. He spent 17 years as a pitcher, mostly with the Detroit Tigers. He is a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame. He is a panel unto himself. Literally. For some reason the committee's staff decided to have Bunning testify alone, perhaps out of concern for his safety or, knowing Bunning, for the other witnesses'.

Bunning launches into a superb Grandpa Simpson imitation, loudly longing for the days of yore. "Maybe I'm old fashioned," he croaks. "I remember when players didn't get better as they got older. We all got worse. When I played with Hank Aaron and Willie Mays and Ted Williams, they didn't put on 40 pounds of bulk in their careers, and they didn't hit more homers in their late thirties than they did in their late twenties." What's going on in baseball "isn't natural." What's going on "isn't right."

His former colleagues in the House are touched. John J. Duncan Jr., Republican from Tennessee, says, "My colleague's statement was one of the finest I have ever heard." Others agree. But they want to make sure: Steroid use in Major League Baseball is an issue on which Congress must act, isn't that correct, Senator?

"Congress should take action at any time."

And what should happen, retroactively, if it's revealed that a player used steroids in the past?

Bunning's pale face contorts into a sneer. He extends his left arm in a sweeping motion, like an ancient king pronouncing sentence on a wretched peasant.

"Wipe all their records out."

The congressmen lean back in their chairs, satisfied looks on their faces.

The congressional staffer who organized today's hearing was clever. She put the stars on the third panel so reporters would have to sit through the first two. She put Jim Bunning in solitary confinement. And she's arranged the second panel in classical style, pitting Emotion against Reason, Dionysus against Apollo. The Emotion is provided by some grieving parents: the Garibaldis, who say that their son Rob committed suicide after he used steroids, and the Hootons, who say the same thing about their son Taylor. The Reason comes from some physicians.

Matthew Continetti is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Zuma Press / Chris Greenberg

Canseco and Sammy Sosa's lawyer

At least it's supposed to. For the most part, the Garibaldis and Hootons tell their stories in measured voices. But the physicians—there are four of them—are loud. Their speech is flowery, their calls for government action impassioned. More, their speech is littered with dirty words: clenbuterol and Dianabol and stanozolol and nandrolone and methandrostenolone and 19-norandrostenedione.

Fortunately, the congressmen's ears are mostly spared. During the second panel they flutter in and out of the hearing room, occasionally casting a wary eye at the witnesses. Only rarely are more than a half a dozen of the 39 members of the committee present at once. The congressmen have to cast a series of votes before they take a two-week vacation, committee staffers tell reporters.

The testimony concludes, and the question-and-answer period begins. The Republicans ask the parents and doctors whether it was appropriate that "Congress should act." The unanimous answer: Yes. Rep. Davis has left the proceedings, and California Republican Darrell Issa is acting chairman. Issa listens to the witnesses urge Congress to action, nods his head, mops his brow, and turns to his Democratic colleagues, extending the opportunity, in a gesture of bipartisanship, for the honorable representatives to ask questions of the distinguished panel. Unfortunately the Democrats have all left.

They return soon enough, however, when it's time for the third panel. Every seat is filled. TV camera crews peer intently from both sides of the chamber. The superstars march in: first comes Schilling, then Palmeiro, then McGwire, then Sosa, then Sosa's translator, then Sosa's lawyer, and finally Canseco and his lawyer. Canseco's biceps are as thick as tree trunks—tree trunks that have been fed a steady diet of 19-norandrostenedione. Rep. Davis grins fiendishly, staring at the players' hulking frames. He lets the athletes make their opening statements. And then, cameras flashing, the temperature in the room rising, Davis purses his lips and calls for . . . a two-and-a-half-hour break.

When the hearing resumes, all eyes are on Mark McGwire. In 1998 McGwire broke Roger Maris's single-season home run record, and doping rumors have plagued him ever since. Canseco and McGwire were teammates on the Oakland Athletics in the 1980s. In *Juiced*, Canseco writes of McGwire, "What we did, more times than I can count, was go into a bathroom stall together and shoot up steroids."

It's clear that the congressmen want McGwire to admit he used steroids, or deny he used them, or invoke his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, which in the eyes of the public would amount to an admission of guilt. McGwire does exactly that—taking the Fifth—but as he struggles under the lights and the leering glances of the legislators, his voice choked with tears, I can't help but notice the strange deference with which the Republicans and Democrats treat Jose Canseco.

In his book Canseco writes he isn't "the type of guy to brag about anything," although he "personally reshaped the game of baseball." Canseco is also a troublemaker. In 1989 he was arrested in California for carrying a loaded semiautomatic weapon in his car. In 1992 he was charged with aggravated battery. In 1997 he was arrested and jailed for beating his wife. In 2001 he was arrested after he and his twin brother Ozzie beat up two tourists in a Miami nightclub. In 2003 he spent three months in jail for violating his probation. He has dated Madonna.

He is often in need of money. Canseco has auctioned off his baseball equipment and other memorabilia online. When he was under house arrest, he charged fans $2,500 to spend a day with him. Reports are that he was paid a $500,000 advance for his new book.

It is a sequel of sorts. Canseco's previous effort, written with ("by" is probably more accurate) Dave McKay, was called *Strength Training for Baseball: Avoid Injuries and Improve Your Stats by Increasing Your Strength*. In it, Canseco wrote: "A word about steroids: don't use them. . . . Steroids have virtually no value even in the short term, if you are serious about baseball."

Almost 15 years later, Canseco tells Congress the same thing. He says that steroid use is "wrong," that Major League Baseball can't be "trusted" to test its own players, that Congress "must act."

The congressmen stroke their chins and nod in agreement.

They might have tried reading the book. Because, while Canseco writes in a preface that *Juiced* "does not intend to condone or encourage the use of any particular drugs, medicine, or illegal substances," he has changed his mind about steroids by the first page.

Some examples. "By the time my eight-year-old daughter, Josie, has graduated from high school, a majority of all professional athletes—in all sports—will be taking steroids. And believe it or not, that's good news" (page one). "Yes, you heard me right: Steroids, used correctly, will not only make you stronger and sexier, they will also make you healthier. Certain

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steroids, used in proper combinations, can cure certain diseases. Steroids will give you a better quality of life and also drastically slow down the aging process" (page three). "I hope this book will help you get over any biases you may have about steroids. I will do my best to help you unlock your own potential, so that even if you are not a professional athlete, you can look like one and feel like one and, in some ways at least, perform like one" (page ten). "The challenge is going to be demonstrating to people that steroids can be a good thing" (page 283).

It is odd, to say the least, to see Canseco appear before Congress as an expert witness. It is odd to see this expert witness refute what he wrote in *Juiced*, by which logic, one supposes, his accusations against players such as McGwire and Palmeiro and Sosa are also thrown into doubt.

Yet no member of Congress except Maryland Democrat Elijah Cummings points out this gaping flaw in Canseco's testimony. And even then Cummings rolls over when Canseco says steroids are "bad."

Curt Schilling shakes his head. Suddenly Jose Canseco is Congress's favorite ballplayer. This may be less surprising than you'd think.

He is, after all, sympathetic to its aims:

> The human race will have to break certain bad habits—things that are truly harmful to the body, like smoking cigarettes. We will have to change as a culture to eliminate our addiction to high-pressure lives, and our fetish for stress. The problem with stress is that it takes its toll on your body and your body's ability to maintain itself. We'll have to find a way to get our act together and clean up the chemicals in the air and the water that bombard us all the time.

Jose Canseco is against smoking and stress. He's for the environment. He's a liar. He's a criminal. He's a tattletale. He changes his story from audience to audience.

Why isn't this guy *in* Congress? ♦

The Bush Factor

What the president has done for his party.

BY FRED BARNES

PRESIDENT BUSH did not initiate the political realignment that made Republicans a majority party. But he has helped create the current moment of opportunity for Republicans to enact a far-reaching conservative agenda. Absent Bush, Republicans might not have 55 senators—which they also had in 1997, but otherwise their greatest number since 1930—which was enough to approve oil-drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge last week and to enact bankruptcy reform the week before. Both measures had failed repeatedly in recent years.

Five factors have come together to give Republicans their best chance for major legislative and foreign policy achievements in nearly 80 years. And Bush has been crucial to each one.

The first factor is, obviously, the Republican ascendancy. Bush had only a little to do with the breakthrough election in 1994, when Republicans won the Senate, House, and a majority of governorships (including that of Texas, where Bush became governor). Nor did he aid Republicans much in 2000 when he won the presidency but not the popular vote.

But in the midterm election of 2002 and last year's presidential contest, Bush campaigned aggressively for Republican congressional candidates. And Republicans picked up seats. Many Republican challengers might have won anyway, but not all. Either his campaigning or his coattails were critical to Senate victories for Saxby Chambliss in Georgia, Mel Martinez in Florida, and David Vitter in Louisiana. The Bush landslide in Alaska helped Sen. Lisa Murkowski keep her seat. And, of course, Bush's own reelection was necessary for Republican rule.

Factor two: Democratic disarray. Nothing drives Democrats to distraction—and to demagoguery—the way Bush does. He brings out the worst in them. If Bush wants something, they're reflexively and often mindlessly against it. They chose the shrill Howard Dean as national chairman, and he insists Republicans in general and Bush in particular are "evil." Senate minority leader Harry Reid says the Bush gang seeks "absolute power." And so on.

Worse for Democrats, Bush makes them delusional. Sen. Edward Kennedy claims that while Democrats lost the 2004 election, they still represent "majority opinion." And he appears to believe it. Others, like Democratic representative Maurice Hinchey of New York, spin conspiracy theories, in public, about the Bush White House and Karl Rove, Bush's political adviser. The conspiracy? Rove slipped those fabricated memos to CBS News, which led to Dan Rather's downfall and Bush's reelection. Really.

The CBS scandal leads to factor three, the crackup of the mainstream media. The MSM—the big papers, TV networks, and newsmags—had been slipping for years. Their role as gatekeepers, deciding what was or wasn't news, was a thing of the past. In the 1990s, the arrival of talk radio and Fox News meant there was a popular alternative media. In 2004, bloggers emerged as a nation of fact-checkers whose chief target was the MSM.

Bloggers exposed the CBS story on Bush's Texas Air National Guard service as a fraud almost instantly. Just as important, they forced a reluctant mainstream media to take up the

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story of the Swift Boat Vets and their challenge of John Kerry's claim to have been a Vietnam war hero. Studies found that the national media were lopsidedly more favorable to Kerry than Bush in their coverage. But Bush won, which tells you something about Big Media's loss of influence.

Factor four: the decline of liberalism. No one has described liberalism's sad state better than Martin Peretz, editor in chief of the *New Republic*. Liberalism is no longer a serious set of ideas. Nor is it a coherent ideology used to guide political action. In 2005, it has become merely a complaint, Peretz suggested, a complaint about Bush and much of America.

And, finally, factor five: an ambitious, impatient president with an agenda. In a word, Bush. Presidents have a choice. They can lead or they can govern. President George H.W. Bush governed. His son *leads*. He does what he doesn't have to do. Or at least tries to. So Bush aims to reform Social Security, curb trial lawyers, make the federal courts more conservative, and implant democracy all over the world.

These five factors have produced a rare political moment for Republicans. It's a moment that won't last more than a year or two. The question is whether they'll do anything with it. Nothing is guaranteed. But a lot is expected. ♦

Saving Private Accounts

The missing ingredient in the Social Security debate. BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY

LAST YEAR AMERICANS SPENT—on consumption, investment, and government—$1.06 for every dollar we earned. We balanced our collective checkbook only by selling assets we owned and by borrowing directly from foreigners, including institutions like the People's Bank of China, to whom one might prefer not to be increasingly indebted. This borrowing is directly tied to an ever growing trend for us to consume foreign-produced goods at the expense of American production. At the moment, foreigners are lending to us quite willingly and at low interest rates, in large part because it helps their own economic strategies. But it would be irresponsible to assume that this lending will go on indefinitely.

So it is surprising that the issue of promoting national saving is not at the center of the debate over Social Security reform. Done right, the reform process offers enormous potential for improving our national saving rate and thus reducing the amount we are borrowing from foreigners over the next century. This is a historic opportunity to adopt a safer economic course. But we must move carefully because there is ample confusion in Washington on the different approaches and their effects on saving.

The first part of any credible Social Security reform plan is to eliminate the actuarial deficit in the system. The system has promised to pay out, in present value terms, $10 trillion more than it will collect in revenue. There are a number of ways of closing this gap, but with different implications for national saving.

One way is to raise payroll taxes by 50 percent to make sure that the government collects all the money it needs to pay the benefits now promised. At best, this might increase saving for a few decades via deficit reduction, but only if Congress, in a break with its past habits, does not spend the extra revenue on non-retirement programs. Once Social Security payments caught up with the enhanced revenue, though, the plan would forever be moving money from one set of people who would otherwise spend it—workers—to another set of people who would spend it instead—retirees. So even in the best case, this would do little to increase national saving. Even worse would be removing the wage cap that determines both Social Security taxes and benefits. Martin Feldstein calculated that eliminating the cap would produce very little net federal revenue. Entrepreneurs faced with a 50 percent tax rate would pay less federal income tax as well as lower payroll taxes. Much of the lost income would have funded business fixed investment, further lowering national saving.

The second way of bringing the system into balance is to change the formula for determining benefits, in a way that gradually reduces the current growth rate in real benefits. As things now stand, there will be a 45 percent increase in Social Security benefits, even after inflation, over the next half century. The system could be brought into balance by limiting future benefits to the level enjoyed by those retiring from the system today,

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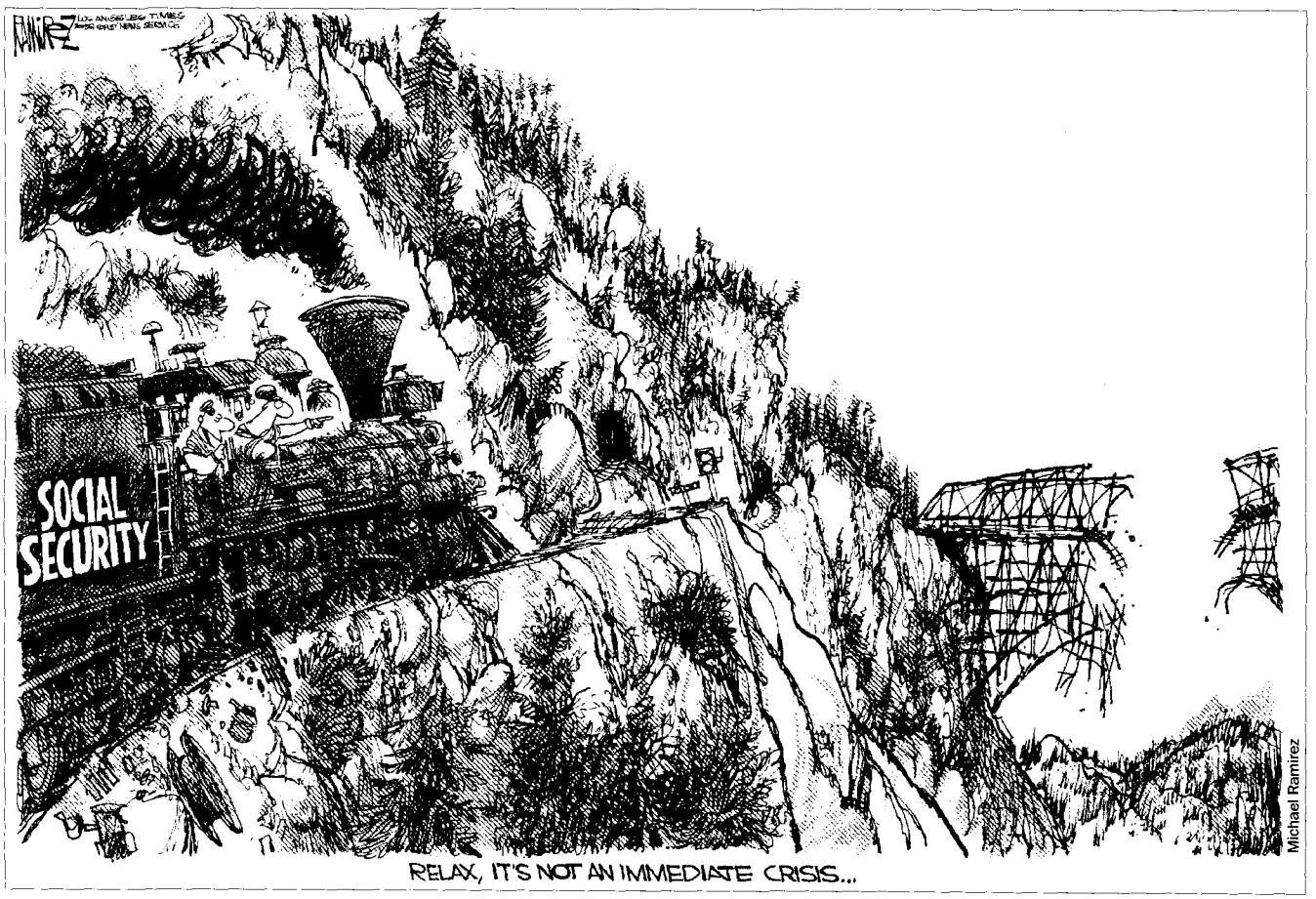
while fully indexing those benefits to inflation. This could even be coupled with a generous minimum Social Security benefit, thus both making the system more progressive and providing a better safety net. The $10 trillion saving to the Social Security system of doing this could be viewed as a one-time improvement in the federal government's balance sheet of the same amount, but would also be an equivalent reduction in expected benefits for future retirees.

National saving would likely rise as a result. In order to maintain the level of consumption in retirement that the government previously promised, but could not deliver, individuals would have to gradually increase their personal saving during their working lives. This may not be easy for some folks. So a second part of any Social Security reform that promotes national saving in this way should be a personal account plan that helps people save and learn the benefits of saving by watching their own accounts grow.

The president's proposal would allow workers to direct a portion of their payroll taxes into a personal account. Any shortfall in meeting current benefits because of the taxes redirected to these accounts would be made up for by government borrowing. But, for an individual to establish an account, his regular Social Security benefit would be lowered prospectively by the amount of payroll tax that is diverted into a personal account. Although the president has not specified an exact offset, this adjustment would likely incorporate an interest rate that repays the government for its borrowing costs. Thus, the individual would keep all of the proceeds of his or her personal account and have a net benefit gain equal to the amount by which the actual return in private stocks, bonds, or other investments exceeds the government's borrowing cost.

At present the government's borrowing cost runs between 1.5 percent and 2 percent in real terms, so the odds are high that the individual would come out ahead. By itself, this part of the president's plan is neutral with regard to national saving. So, unlike what some critics say, personal accounts do not need to be "paid for." They already are paid for, with interest, in the reform envisioned by the president.

Still, the national saving opportunity of Social Security reform could be further enhanced. The best way is to allow workers to choose a plan where they would contribute more to their retirement in return for gaining ownership and a higher return on their existing payroll taxes. In effect, Social Security taxes could be used to match these contributions. Many companies successfully use this approach for their own 401(k) plans, but the Social Security match could easily be more generous.



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Consider, for illustrative purposes, a plan that asked employees to contribute 1.5 percent of their wages to their own personal account, with no change in their current taxes. Social Security could offer a four-for-one match on employee contributions made on the first $10,000 of earnings and a one-for-one match on contributions made on earnings above that amount. The government match would be funded with existing payroll taxes. A worker making $10,000 would thus contribute $150 a year to his account and be matched $600—producing a $750 account. A worker making $50,000 would contribute $750 a year and be matched $1,200, producing a $1,950 personal account. The resulting accounts would build up much more quickly, generate more earnings, and provide far more funds for retirement. Any future benefit adjustment would relate only to the government's match, not to the employee's contribution. But as in the president's plan, the Social Security system would be made whole for any diversion of existing payroll tax revenue.

Best of all, national saving would be enhanced unambiguously. The funds being contributed by workers, 40 percent of the amount of the account on average, would largely be net contributions to national saving. They would also involve the real attributes of ownership of capital since the worker would unequivocally have some "skin in the game." Politically, this approach also splits the rhetorical difference in Washington between those favoring an "add on" (new contributions) and those favoring a "carve out" (no new contributions). A high initial match rate would also create the right kind of incentives to change long term attitudes toward national saving, as well as being more progressive than the current Social Security system.

Given the critical importance of saving to our nation's economic future, it is important to make the most of the once-in-a-generation opportunity to promote national saving offered by Social Security reform. ♦

Hating America, Turkish Style

This too shall pass.

BY MUSTAFA AKYOL

LONGTIME ALLIES of the United States, the Turks have been sympathetic to American values for decades. Nevertheless, a new BBC World Service poll of 21 countries shows Turkey to be the least friendly to America, especially the current administration. Eighty-two percent of Turks said they found President Bush's reelection "negative for peace and security in the world." While this sentiment doubtless reflects a global reaction to the war in Iraq, there are also distinctive local factors that explain the current wave of Turkish anti-American feeling.

One of these is the Kurdish question. The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, under the influence of secularist European nationalism. Rather than building a national identity around the shared Islamic heritage of its various peoples, modern Turkey sought to achieve national cohesion by converting its non-Turkish ethnic groups—notably the Kurds—into Turks. This effort at social engineering has only partly succeeded.

Most Kurds retain their ethnic identity—and their suspicion of the Turkish state. In the 1980s and '90s, the Marxist-Leninist Kurdish radicals of the PKK exploited this distrust. The PKK carried out a bloody terrorist war against Turkish rule and assimilated Kurds—a war that killed more than 30,000 citizens of Turkey. Today the PKK is weakened—thanks partly to American support of Turkey—but the fate of the Kurds remains uncertain.

The Kurds, of course, live in Iraq as well as in Turkey, divided in two by the border between these neighbors. For hard-core Turkish nationalists of both left and right, the best Iraq is an authoritarian one, ruled by a strongman in Baghdad who suppresses the Kurds in the north of his country, keeping Turkey's southern border quiet. This explains these nationalists' enduring sympathy for Saddam Hussein. For them, a free and democratic Iraq sounds alarm bells, for if the Kurds flourish in Iraq, they may inspire their brethren on the other side of the border to attempt to secede from Turkey and join them.

That perceived threat might not be entirely fanciful, but the best solution would seem to be to make Turkey's Kurds so free and prosperous that they wouldn't want secession. Indeed, the current parliament, led by the AKP government, has granted many cultural freedoms to the Kurds in the last two years. Nevertheless, many hard-core nationalists wish to return to the "no Kurds allowed" policy of the good old days. For them, the Kurds are not countrymen to be won, but bitter enemies to be fought.

Anti-Americanism comes naturally to this mindset. The more the Iraqi Kurds can be portrayed as agents of "American imperialism," the more suspicion of the Turkish Kurds will seem justified. As the prominent Turkish columnist Cengiz Candar has noted, some Turkish nationalists are pressing an anti-Kurdish agenda under the guise of anti-American propaganda. (A U.S. crackdown on PKK

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camps in northern Iraq would help neutralize that propaganda and answer Ankara's justified concern about the resurgence of this terrorist threat.)

The prominence of the nationalist establishment in Turkey's media is another factor in the current anti-Americanism.

Actually, two camps dominate the Turkish mainstream media. The first and smaller one consists of hard-core nationalists—the "Kemalists," who claim to follow in the footsteps of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. What they really do, however, is carve a frozen ideology out of Atatürk's pragmatic legacy. The second, larger camp is the more relaxed, cosmopolitan, somewhat liberal, highly Westernized intelligentsia known as the "White Turks."

While Kemalists are categorically anti-Western, White Turks champion Turkey's bid to join the E.U. Most have been big fans of the United States, but they, too, have some quarrels with the Bush administration. Some of these are related to the Iraq war. The White Turks are attuned to the liberal media in the United States, and their heroes are figures like Michael Moore and, for the rare sophisticate, Maureen Dowd.

Moreover, most senior White Turks are former left-wing activists of the '68 generation. They chanted antiwar slogans during Vietnam, and their present-day protests against "American imperialism" carry a whiff of nostalgia.

The other problem that most White Turks and all Kemalists have with President Bush is more philosophical: They consider him far too religious. They have always believed that modernization means secularization, and they don't like the fact that the most modern nation on Earth is also among the most religious, with a president who starts the day by reading Scripture. It is no accident that the fiercest salvos in the Turkish press against President Bush and the values voters who helped reelect him come from columnists who are also, in the Turkish context, fiercely anti-Islamic. One such figure, the columnist Ozdemir Ince, recently wrote that the Americans who voted for Bush must be "ignorant" because "they believe in things like . . . man is created, or that heaven exists." For good measure, Ince frequently attacks "American secularism" for being too soft on religion and rails against Turkish conservatives who sympathize with it.

In fact, Americans may be surprised to learn of an interesting conspiracy theory to which both Kemalists and White Turks subscribe: namely, that the United States intends to abolish the secular regime in Turkey and replace it with a moderate Islamic one. The best "evidence" for this, they say, is that top U.S. officials have mentioned Turkey as an exemplary "moderate Muslim country." While this characterization obviously refers to Turkish society, not the state, it is unacceptable for the ultrasecularist camp. They simply can't stand to hear the words "Islam" and "Turkey" in the same sentence.

Reuters Photo Archive

Burning Bush: anti-American rally in Istanbul

A third important factor in Turkish anti-Americanism is the role played by radical Islam.

Traditionally, Islamic conservatives in Turkey have been sympathetic to the United States, which helped save Turkey from godless communism and has strong religious and moral values. Since the early '80s, however, an alien strain of radical Islam has poured into Turkey from the Middle East, a strain that is constitutionally anti-American, and virulently anti-Semitic. The boundaries between traditional conservatism and the new Islamism are not always clear-cut. Thus, the AKP government is conservative, but Islamist conspiracy theories about the imagined "American crusade" against Islam influence the thinking of some AKP supporters.

None of this is to deny that there are facts feeding anti-American sentiment. Of these, the shameful mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the civilian deaths in operations against the Baathist/Zarqawist insurgency in Iraq are the most conspicuous.

The overwhelming success of the elections in Iraq, however, has been an inspiration for many, including some Turks heretofore suspicious of America. Once a stable democracy is established in Iraq, the conspiracy theories that prey on Turkish minds should start to fade away. Then anti-Americanism in Turkey should retreat to its usual strongholds—the Marxist left, the orthodox Kemalists, the ultrasecular portion of the White Turks, and the radical Islamists—for they despise America for what it really is: a nation that is modern, free, and open-minded, yet religious and moral, and that stands for liberty in the world.

Most Turks, in fact, cherish the same values. That's why their bitterness towards Americans is almost surely temporary. These two nations are natural friends and allies, pushed into temporary distrust by some unfortunate events and poisonous ideologies. ♦

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Turn Them Off. Turn Them All Off.

The subversive joys of TV-B-Gone

By Andrew Ferguson

San Francisco

If you discount his magenta and burnt-orange hair, teased into long curls that dangle down the nape of his neck, Mitch Altman is a modest man, with a diffident manner. He's the sort of person who, if he has to use a cell phone in a public place, turns away and covers his mouth with his free hand, lest he bother someone. His modesty is not only charming and rare but also wholly unjustified. For Mitch is the founder, CEO, and co-owner (with his mom) of Cornfield Electronics, and he has invented the single greatest technological breakthrough of the past three-and-a-half centuries, at least. He has nothing to be modest about.

Mitch's invention is called TV-B-Gone. He carries one on his keychain, as, God willing, you will someday carry one on yours. It fits snugly in the palm, a near-weightless lump of black plastic. Its shape vaguely suggests the Batman logo. A tiny diode rests on the very tip of Batman's head, between his pointy bat ears. Press a button and from this diode a beam of invisible light escapes that can turn off any television—*any* television—within a radius of 45 feet.

Yes, yes, yes: Imagine the possibilities. You sit in a doctor's waiting room, casting your mind forward to the grisly procedures he has in store for you (you can almost hear the snap of the rubber gloves) and hung high above you in a corner near the ceiling, well out of reach, Maury Povich is interviewing an adulteress, her daughter, and her daughter's transgendered lover, as the studio audience whoops and yelps and stomps its hairy feet. You reach in your pocket and withdraw your key chain. You tilt Batman's head toward the screen: TV-B-Gone! And it's gone!

Or the airline has delayed your flight, again, and all you want is to go home, and as you pace the soulless terminal from one end to the other the voice of Wolf Blitzer trails you like a police siren, roaring out from the CNN television monitors which have been spaced every 10 yards, so you're never out of earshot. The TSA guards may have taken your Swiss Army Knife, but they've left you with your lump of plastic. You point and press. Wolf-B-Gone!

On the phone your girlfriend has whispered the ominous words, "We have to talk." You meet in a neutral bar, amid the ferns and gleaming brass. Yet you can scarcely hear a word she says for the soccer game blaring in Spanish from the inevitable television that no one is watching. *¡Hasta la vista, televisión!*

You will want to come up with your own scenarios. "I use mine in the Laundromat a lot," says Mitch, sitting in Cornfield's worldwide headquarters, which are in a one-bedroom walk-up near the corner of Castro and Market streets in San Francisco. Mitch lives nearby, and like many bachelors he spends a lot of time at the Laundromat.

"The TV is always on, whether there's anybody there or not. And really, the last thing you want to see while you're doing your laundry is things blowing up, reports of murders, crime and stuff. Or *Dr. Phil*." He shudders visibly. "I've never been in there when people are really watching it. They're *distracted* by it, but that's different. So when I pull out my TV-B-Gone and turn the TV off, they go back to their book, or they talk to each other, or they watch the laundry go round and round and round. Nobody ever gets annoyed."

It was under similarly prosaic circumstances that the idea for TV-B-Gone came to him. He was having dinner with friends in a neighborhood restaurant. Up in a corner near the ceiling a television screen flickered. The sound was muted, but Mitch and his friends found themselves turning their attention to it anyway—an experience that every citizen of every country wired with electricity has had at one time or another.

"You could just feel this screen suck the energy right out of the conversation," he says. "I thought, 'Gee, I wish I could turn that thing off.'"

A friend was thinking the same thing. "What we

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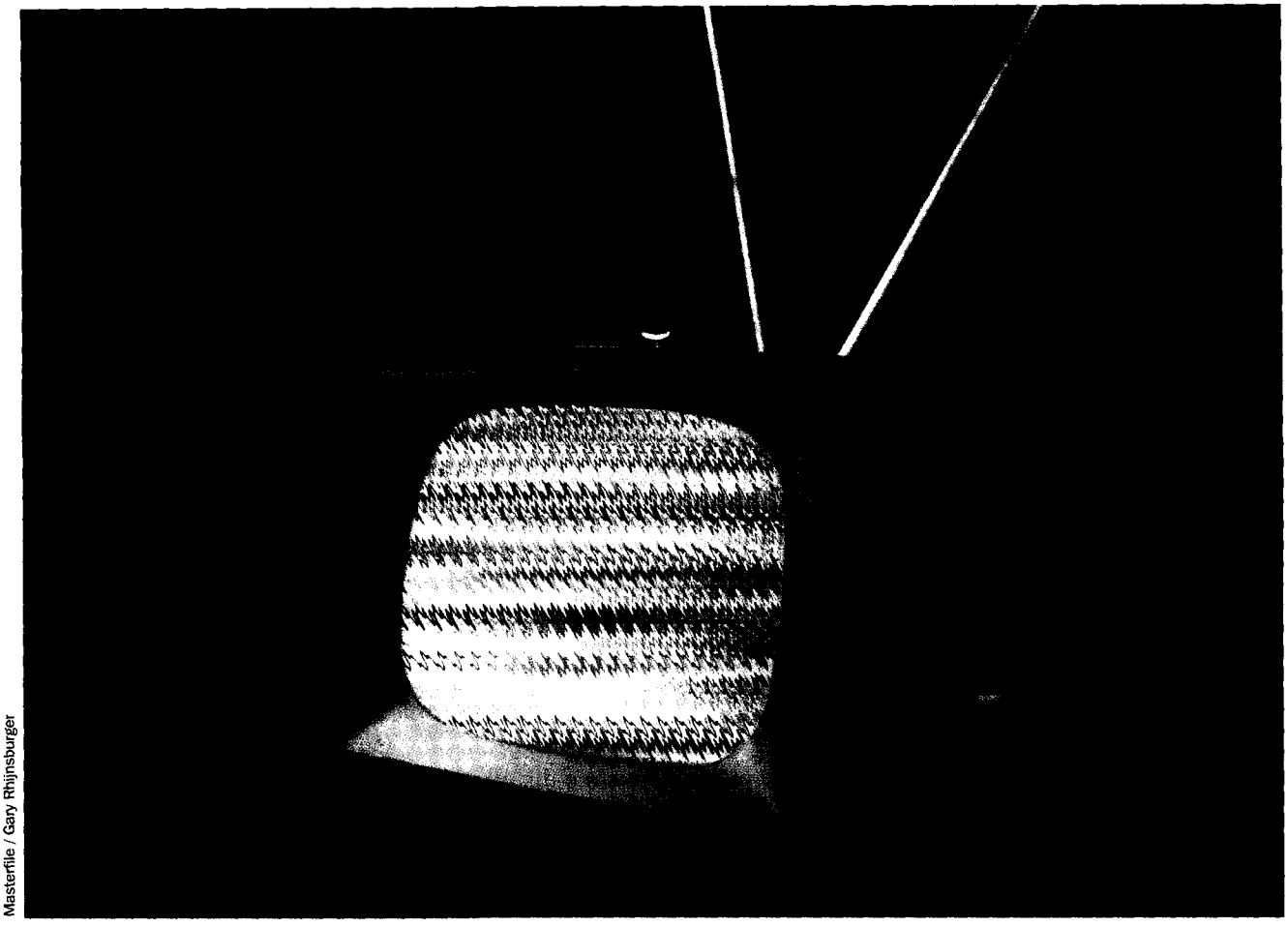

Masterfile / Gary Rhijnsburger

Gary Rhijnsburger / Masterfile

need," said his friend, in a burst of inspiration, "is a TV-B-Gone!"

Over the next few years, Mitch worked away at the idea in his spare time. He's an electronics wizard and, at 48, a veteran of many Silicon Valley start-ups. When a company he owned shares in was sold, he took his $80,000 windfall and devoted himself to TV-B-Gone full time.

The invention was launched last fall, and it met with a press reception that ranged from mildly amused to wildly enthusiastic. His timing couldn't have been better. Every traveler knows about CNN in the airports, but now gas stations have begun hanging televisions above their pumps, and stores of every kind routinely confront their customers with TV sets beckoning them down the aisles. Wachovia Bank is placing televisions in the lobbies of all its branches to guard against the possibility that customers waiting in line might grow restless or, worse, begin to cogitate. Wal-Mart announced last month that it was heavily investing in thousands of new 42-inch high-definition LCD televisions, to be placed strategically throughout all its stores. Every Wal-Mart is already a riot of television screens, of course, but as a company spokesman complained to the *New York Times*, the existing TV monitors were bolted "high above shoppers' heads and easily overlooked." Let them just try to overlook a 42-inch high LCD screen. Let them just try.

In times such as these many people will ache for something like the TV-B-Gone. Mitch's press has been so approving and so voluminous, with dozens of jokey stories in newspapers and magazines, that he has yet to spend a dime on publicity. The website of gadget-happy *Wired* magazine featured the TV-B-Gone the day Mitch started up. That morning he sold 1,200 units online until his web server crashed. The next day he sold 2,300 more before the server crashed again. Since November he's sold another 40,000, with demand showing no signs of slack. Now, having been interviewed for ABC-TV, NBC-TV, and the *CBS Evening News*, Mitch has found himself cast in the unexpected role of sage, or oracle—a prophet, even. He's happy to oblige. Television has done stranger things to people.

"What I want to do is, to take this annoyance of having TVs everywhere, and bring it back to the realm of choice," he says. "You should be able to choose whether you want this machine on or off. You should be able to think about it. Does having this thing talking at us, whether we like it or not, make our lives better, or worse,

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or what? Let's at least have a chance to think about it, and talk about it, and then make a choice."

Inevitably, there has been a backlash. CNN, which owns all those Blitzer-blaring TVs in all those airports, is reportedly trying to concoct a way for its TV monitors to identify a remote signal from a TV-B-Gone and ignore it. ("That's okay," says Mitch with a shrug. "I'll just make a TV-B-Gone Deluxe.") And professional ethicists have begun to sniff their disapproval. "The use of TV-B-Gone is unilateral self-interested conduct," wrote Jack Marshall in a communiqué from his "ethics training" firm, ProEthics, Ltd. In airports, for example, authorities have "determined that travelers would appreciate a television." Any traveler who turns off the TV is thus resorting to "vigilante action."

But that scarcely seems a fair picture of today's airports, does it? By dotting their property with television screens, the authorities aren't offering a service. They're engaged in a commercial transaction, selling access to a helpless, captive audience (us) to the highest bidder. If there's a violation of the social compact here, it came when the airport authorities—managers of a public accommodation, after all—decided to fill their air with unsolicited din. A quick flick of the TV-B-Gone merely restores the more civilized status quo ante.

Even some of Mitch's fellow gadget-heads have turned against his invention, and against him. "Mitch Altman is an a—," announced Gizmodo, *Gawker.com*'s survey of consumer electronics, in a review of the TV-B-Gone. "And not just any a— but one of those snotty holier-than-thou types who has nothing better to do . . . than to develop a device with the sole purpose of imposing his viewpoint on others. See, Altman hates the television and its encroachment into public space. Rather than just doing what most everybody else has done—which is either *not really caring* or, failing that, *getting the f— over it*—Altman has invented a device called the 'TV-B-Gone.'"

The *Gawker* critic has, in addition to a terrible case of potty mouth, a point, sort of; at least he's accurately identified what irritates him about Mitch and about Mitch's invention. Mitch offends a certain kind of modern sensibility because he is a moralist who means it. And it's not just television's violation of public space that Mitch dislikes; it's television itself. There's a reason the TV-B-Gone has only an off switch and not a channel-changer. His hostility to TV is global, indiscriminate—all TV is pretty much the same to him. I think he'd get as much pleasure zapping *Charlie Rose* as *Elimidate*.

TV-B-Gone appears just as Americans—well, a couple of us—prepare to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman's great book-length anti-TV screed from 1985. Mitch is a merry moralist and Postman was a dour one, given to jowl-shaking declarations of doom, but his book is worth rereading today, as prescient in its unhappy way as the work of Marshall McLuhan. "Television," wrote Postman, has become "so familiar and so thoroughly integrated with American culture that we no longer hear its faint hissing in the background or see the flickering gray light." At the same time, he said, "to enter the great television conversation, one American cultural institution after another is learning to speak its terms." Not just retail stores and airports and gas stations, but libraries and museums and concert halls, too.

Postman published *Amusing Ourselves to Death* at a crucial time for gloom-and-doomers. They were still recovering from the Great 1984 Scare and the terrible letdown that followed it. For thirty years worrywarts in the United States had expected a totalitarian curtain to fall across the land, just as George Orwell had foretold in his novel *1984*. And then when the year finally arrived, all the alarmists got was the Los Angeles Olympics and the Reagan landslide. Postman was the first intellectual, so far as I know, to announce that the alarmists had been looking in the wrong direction: The dystopia that threatened a happy, prosperous country like ours wasn't Orwell's *1984* but Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, where technology, especially television, isn't a tool of repression but a lullaby, an instrument of distraction and somnolence: "In Huxley's vision," Postman wrote,

> no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think. What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture.

Not even Postman, 20 years ago, could have predicted the constant presence of publicly displayed, privately controlled televisions wherever unsuspecting Americans gather to twiddle their thumbs. I doubt that any of Mitch's customers really thinks we've arrived at Huxley's Brave New World. Our present condition doesn't necessarily entail "grave threats to our autonomy." But it does contain a host of subversive annoyances that can be tolerated only by the happy, compliant, slack-jawed citizens that Huxley described. And to this world, not so brave but very new, Mitch's device is the perfect response. Don't leave home without it, as they say on TV. ♦

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Teaching Darwin

Why we're still fighting about biology textbooks

By Paul McHugh

Eighty years ago this summer, the Scopes trial upheld the effort of the state of Tennessee to exclude the teaching of Darwinian evolution from Tennessee classrooms. The state claimed Darwinism contradicted orthodox religion. But times change, and recently a federal judge ruled that a three-sentence sticker stating that "evolution is a theory not a fact" must be removed from Georgia high school biology texts because it contradicts orthodox science and represents an unconstitutional endorsement of religion. Both legal mandates—no Darwin yesterday, nothing but Darwin today—look less like science than exercises in thought control.

Everyone agrees that the Scopes trial (viciously caricatured in the play and movie *Inherit the Wind*) was a setback for the teaching of scientific reasoning. But the same is true of the Georgia ruling, Darwinism being quite obviously a biological theory and open to dispute. To claim otherwise is to be woefully misinformed.

Science, as high school students need to know, is a logically articulated structure of beliefs about nature that are justified by methods of reasoning one can evaluate. It is whether the methods pass muster that counts for or against a scientific opinion, not how the opinion fits our preconceptions.

Charles Darwin proposed that random variation within life forms, working together with natural selection ("the preservation of favorable variations and the rejection of injurious variations") across the vast expanse of time since the earth was formed, explains "how the universe created intelligence," as Francis Bacon had stated the problem a few centuries before. To judge whether the matter is now closed to all criticism, such that Darwinism stands with scientific facts like "the earth is a planet of the sun" or "the blood circulates in the body," demands we consider Darwin's method of reasoning.

The leading Darwinist in America, Ernst Mayr, describes the method:

> Evolutionary biology, in contrast with physics and chemistry, is a historical science—the evolutionist attempts to explain events and processes that have already taken place. Laws and experiments are inappropriate techniques for the explication of such events and processes. Instead one constructs a historical narrative, consisting of a tentative reconstruction of the particular scenario that led to the events one is trying to explain.

Darwin, Mayr goes on, "established a philosophy of biology . . . by showing that theories in evolutionary biology are based on concepts rather than laws."

After noting Mayr's fearless use of the words "tentative," "philosophy," and "theory," one surely is justified in responding: No wonder Darwinism, in contrast to other scientific theories, seems an argument without end! It's *history*—indeed, history captured by that creative-writing-class concept *narrative*. If historical narrative—and the "philosophy" it propounds—are what justify the Darwinian opinions, the textbook writers of Georgia can legitimately claim that Darwin's "tentative reconstruction" is not only a theory but a special kind of theory, one lacking the telling and persuasive power that theories built on hypothesis-generated experiment and public prediction can garner.

Darwin himself understood that questions raised about his narrative had substance. In Chapter IX of *On the Origin of Species*, he noted that the fossil record had failed to "reveal any . . . finely graduated organic chain" linking, as he proposed, existing species to predecessors. He called the record "imperfect" and went so far as to say, "This, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory." Darwin presumed that the problem rested on the "poorness of our palaeontological collections" and would be

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answered when more of "the surface of the earth has been geologically explored."

In the same Chapter IX, Darwin also acknowledged that the fossil record does suggest the "sudden appearance of whole groups of allied species all at once." He noted that if this fact were to stand, and "numerous species belonging to the same genera or families have really started into life all at once, . . . [it] would be fatal to the theory of descent with slow modification through natural selection." He forestalled that fatal blow to his theory by asking his readers not to "over-rate the perfection of the geological record."

Any sympathetic reader of Darwin's history would readily allow him the point—that earlier life forms might have all come and gone elsewhere than where later forms emerged and might have done so without leaving a fossil record to demonstrate the smooth gradation between species. But such a reader should admit, as Darwin did, that the absence of the record is a serious matter—especially when it persists to this day, nearly a century and a half after Darwin's book was published. This imperfection of the historical record was, after all, sufficiently embarrassing to provoke some evolutionary biologists nearly 100 years ago to try to improve on the record by manufacturing the counterfeit fossil Piltdown Man.

Even among committed Darwinists, the imperfection of the fossil record has been a source of huge argument. The Darwinian fundamentalist Richard Dawkins of Oxford believes in smooth and gradual evolutionary processes. He became a vicious antagonist to Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard, who championed "punctuated equilibrium," with abrupt species generation after millennia of stability. Dawkins attacked Gould in large part because Gould's idea greatly shortened the time evolutionary processes had to generate species.

All the more reason, then, for our sympathetic reader to look for other means of supporting Darwin's narrative. Perhaps the demonstrable variations that occur in species living under altered circumstances might answer objections.

With this in mind, Darwin devotes the very first chapter of *On the Origin of Species* to describing variations in plants and domestic animals produced over time by methodical selective breeding by farmers and fanciers. Plainly their practice of permitting only the most choice individuals to reproduce and so "enhance the breed" demonstrates how hereditary modification of members of a given species is possible—indeed, it displays the process.

Darwin, however, then makes an extrapolation. Beginning with the reasonable presumption that the hereditary mechanisms involved in producing these enhancements in the barnyard must be available and randomly active in nature, he proposes that from such random variation can spring new species. Variation—repeated ad infinitum down the ages, with its products culled by natural selection rather than by artful human breeding—is the process by which Darwin links up all of biologic creation. This is the Darwinian narrative in its clearest form—history by extrapolation—and it is not problem-free.

Many of us were taught these Darwinian extrapolatory links to the evolutionary narrative in high school, usually with photographs of the European peppered moth (*Biston betularia*), which became darker with environmental pollution and thus less conspicuous to bird predators in industrial areas. The same idea springs up in discussions of the development of bacterial resistance to antibiotics, or of the transformation of the beaks of finches under the pressure of drought. We were taught in high school that these observable biologic changes display evolution "in front of your eyes."

No farmer or experimental scientist has ever produced a new species by cultivating variations. The peppered moth didn't become a butterfly.

But not everyone agreed with this conclusion. Many criticized the Darwinists for extrapolating too far, and now the Darwinists confess that actual, observable variation—whether in the barnyard or in nature—demonstrates only the capacity of a species population to vary within limits. The original species picture reappears when either the farmer's selective enterprise or the natural environmental pressure on the species population stops and crossbreeding recurs. The finches' beaks never turn into pelican pouches but revert to their original shape when the rains arrive.

No farmer or experimental scientist has ever produced a new species by cultivating variations. The peppered moth didn't become a butterfly, and the closely and repeatedly studied fruit fly, despite gazillions of generations producing varieties in the laboratory, always remains a fruit fly. Again, Darwin himself was more honest than his followers have been. He knew the distinction between variations that could be observed and those posited according to the theoretical extrapolation that was key to his narrative. For this reason he repeatedly notes, as in Chapter IV of *On the Origin of Species*, that "natural selection will always act very slowly, often only at long intervals of time, and generally on only a few of the inhabitants." In this way he puts

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the process of species generation outside the reach of experimental demonstration.

At this point, the sympathetic reader eager to secure Darwin's narrative might resort to searching the "biochemical record." Surely the molecular structures of DNA, RNA, and proteins contain the long-sought evidence. Again, though, molecular biology helps in some ways in that it shows commonalities across species—just as other aspects of anatomical structures show commonalities—but again it's the distinctions—and the means by which they are generated—rather than the similarities that must be explained to support the theory.

If one turns to DNA to show how Homo sapiens gradually emerged by small and random variations from predecessors, one faces an immediate problem. At the level of DNA, humans and chimpanzees differ by a mere 1 percent, yet the chimpanzee is not 99 percent human in body, brain, or mental faculties—far from it. We need something more than the DNA record to support a narrative linking chimps and men.

Perhaps it's enough for the friendly guardian of the Darwinian narrative to propose that the genes that control the switching on and off of other genes simply changed in some random way, allowing humans to branch off the primate line. And maybe they did. But again, notice, this is a molecular narrative, not a proposition demonstrable by experiment. It's a story that fits the facts—but so might another.

Surely at this point the friendly reader might agree that, like any historical account, the Darwinian narrative can fairly be challenged—not to say that it must be wrong, only that it needs more supportive evidence. Perhaps there are statistical proofs or engineering concepts that could be found, or something else that might emerge that would be subject to verification by the scientific method.

But our would-be friend to evolution will soon discover that *any* questioning of the Darwinian narrative, no matter how sympathetic, is shouted down. If mathematicians try to say that even with the immense span of geological time available for random genetic variations to act, there is not time enough to produce the human eye, the response—typical for historians, who routinely argue backward from observations to their causes—is, Since the eye exists the math must be wrong.

If Michael J. Behe, the cellular biochemist who wrote *Darwin's Black Box*, proposes that the complicated molecular mechanisms sustaining the integrity of the cell seem impossible to explain as the result of random variations, the president of the National Academy of Sciences counters by pronouncing, "Modern scientific views of the molecular organization of life are entirely consistent with spontaneous variation and natural selection driving a powerful evolutionary process." That is, he affirms the Darwinian narrative by restating it, not by offering compelling proof that it is true. Lots of views are consistent with the cell's complexity—including the view Behe explores, that an intelligent creator designed the cell to work. But cellular formation needs identified generative mechanisms, not simply a consistent narrative, to *explain* it—a problem both for those who call on Darwin and those who call on an "intelligent designer."

Official science is too much at ease with the Darwinian narrative—primarily because it can't come up with anything better. As a result, many scientists are driven by an ideological bias and by fear—the thought that any challenge to the narrative will plunge the republic back into some dark age. Richard Dawkins and his associate Niall Shanks predict that, as Shanks wrote, "discriminatory, conservative Christian values [will be imposed] on our educational, legal, social and political institutions" should the public schools permit any airing of questions about the Darwinian narrative. This fear is way over the top, but it's of long standing, and in the past has provoked some loss of judgment among scientists.

When the most distinguished biological scientist of the 20th century, Francis Crick, saw the same complications as Michael Behe, he also concluded that time on Earth and random variation were not adequate to produce the viable cell. Crick resolved the dilemma, in a fascinating book called *Life Itself* published in 1981, by suggesting that living cells arrived on an unmanned spaceship from another planet, perhaps sent by intelligent beings facing extinction. He called his concept "directed panspermia," and this strange concept (I prefer to call it "life from Krypton") received a respectful hearing from biologists. With this imaginative device Crick could keep the narrative alive. He explained life's cellular origins without worrying about time, kept the God he hated out of the picture, and preserved the possibility of random variation and natural selection working their magic from these "seedlings" from a "galaxy far far away."

By now, it would seem that a sympathetic reader of Darwin, if honest, could conclude the following. Darwinism is an imperfect theory, based as it is on a historical narrative, and carrying as it does the remarkable capacity to explain anything and exclude nothing. It has great strengths, and it has great evidential lacunae that seem no closer to resolution than when Darwin himself called attention to them 146 years ago.

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The biological evidence—life rests on the cellular organization of nucleotides and proteins—compels the conclusion that all the various forms of life on Earth derive from a common source, as Darwin emphasized. Life is not recreated with every new species—this is now undeniable. The Darwinian concept of descent with modification seems the most plausible way to relate life and its varieties. Modifications within species are often responses to environmental challenges, and they sustain a species with the variety of expressions necessary for it to survive these challenges.

But when one tries to grasp how the distinct species, as against varieties, are generated—by what mechanism they separate—a pause to reflect is warranted. Darwin's random variation and natural selection may well offer the best available narrative, the most compelling theory. Yet something seems missing—for example, any sense of what propels life's forms toward a progressive complexity, rather than toward a simplicity of design that would guarantee survival come what may.

The discipline of evolutionary biology today resembles astrophysics when Galileo was attempting to explain the planetary orbits and the oceanic tides but lacked the concept of the force of gravity. His observations were accurate enough, but explanations awaited an Isaac Newton.

Evolutionary biology awaits its Newton. And until such a thinker emerges—to provide a fuller conception of the history of life and especially the forces at play that explain how things happened as they did—those who would expel all challenges to the Darwinian narrative from the high school classroom are false to their mission of teaching the scientific method.

Scientists as they engage in dialogue with others should abhor attempts to close off the conversation by excessive claims for any privileged access to truth. Scientists should tell what they actually know and how they know it, as distinct from what they believe and are trying to advance. If all of us, scientists and non-scientists alike, accepted that guiding principle, the 80-year history of attempts to use law to stifle the teaching of science—stretching as it does from the courtrooms of Dayton, Tennessee, to those of Cobb County, Georgia—could perhaps finally be brought to a close. ♦

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Bush's String of Firecrackers

Time for some democratic noise in East Asia

By Ross Terrill

"The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands," President Bush declared on January 20. Yet influential opinion insists that an exception be carved out for East Asia. There, they say, freedom is optional, hierarchical "Asian values" reign, and democracy is a luxury. In taking this view, the foreign policy establishment could not be more mistaken. Indeed, as the Bush administration segues from an anti-terrorism to a pro-democracy emphasis, the timing is impeccable for pressure on East Asia's remaining dictatorships, and the opportunity is huge.

Starting with Singapore's leader Lee Kuan Yew in the 1970s, the Asian values chorus has sung the praises of economic growth under authoritarian governance, identifying this mix with Confucianism. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) always sat lightly to democracy, even before making the horrendous mistake of admitting Burma's dictatorship in 1997. Liberal American China-specialists consider the twice democratically elected president Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan "reckless." They prefer the predictability of the unelected Red Mandarins in Beijing. "Stability" they understand; "people power" scares them. If China's economy grows at 9 percent, they purr, why should it bother with the messy confusions of democracy?

Beijing's smooth spokesmen in dark suits and red ties imply that communism in China has slipped away in the middle of the night. "Peace and development are our twin goals," Beijing says, and its Western friends parrot the half-truth. Sinologues eschew the crude term "Chinese Communists" for the more genteel "Chinese elites." President Clinton in the 1990s twice referred to the People's Republic of China as a former Communist country. Yet China's political crisis still lies ahead. The nine engineers who run the politburo steer perilously between the Scylla of commercialization and the Charybdis of Leninism. The "success of liberty" is not yet at hand in China.

America's ties with dictatorships are never close and enduring like those with democracies. Japan, Australia, South Korea, the Philippines, and other democracies interact with Washington in rich ways that cannot occur with China and Vietnam. Heartening improvement marks Jakarta-Washington relations, as Indonesia firms up its long-awaited democracy. Look at U.S., Australian, and other military activity in Indonesia's Aceh province after the tsunami. China would never permit these (highly effective) operations to cope with disaster in, say, Tibet, where Beijing's political control is tight as a drum.

A dictatorship shields its society from international relations. No one can say what priority the Chinese people give to holding Tibet or grabbing Taiwan. Still less does the world know how many North Koreans would favor reunification of their peninsula under the Seoul regime. The Chinese and North Koreans have never been consulted on these matters.

Japan's experience displays the link between democracy and peace, and between democracy and true stability. Japan's first rise to international power ended in a disastrous fall, as a militaristic regime's adventures in the 1930s and 1940s turned Asia against Tokyo. After an American occupation that wrote a new Japanese constitution, Japan became a democracy and has proved a model international citizen. Generous out of all proportion to the loudness of its voice, Japan has become perhaps the most important security partner of the United States in the world, with a sizable military that nevertheless has not killed a single foreigner in six decades.

A similar lesson is implicit in the age of economics that has blessed East Asia since 1975. An era of wars culminated in Vietnam. Subsequently, with the American market as a magnet, and American treaties with the democracies of Japan, Australia, South Korea, and others

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as the security framework, a new middle-class East Asia stood up as consumers, professionals, and vacationers. The "dominos" of Maoist revolution did not fall; the attraction of liberty and the efficacy of free markets was too great. Instead of war, ASEAN leaders indulged in summits, sweet talk, and golf.

Prior to invading Iraq, President Bush said "a liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region." Critics in their haste to declare Iraq a failure did not weigh Bush's prediction. Proved wrong, they uttered a panicky new cry: "Which country is Bush going to invade next?" Gearing up to oppose a vividly imagined fresh war, they overlooked the string-of-firecrackers effect. Precisely because the first firecracker, Iraq, went off with such a big bang, heard around the Middle East and beyond, the next firecrackers need go off less dramatically.

Success in Iraq, Bush's victory on November 2, Arafat's demise, and the ongoing appeal of economic and political freedom to ordinary folk, all triggered political changes across the globe that lessen the need for massive U.S. military intervention again soon. It's easier to integrate idealistic rhetoric with policy if the world knows you're serious about the use of military power; that's the difference between Clinton and Bush.

It is true that Iraq has distracted Bush from East Asia, but Afghanistan and Iraq have also been felt in East Asia, to America's benefit. The United States has become a big player on China's western doorstep in Uzbekistan and other Central Asia republics. Japan has shed some of its self-imposed reticence in security matters. Bush's message that anti-terrorism is ultimately pro-democracy is not lost on Southeast Asians, who face terror threats close to home.

Most poignant, the fall of a Middle East dictator embarrassed East Asia dictators. The toppling of Saddam Hussein furrowed brows in Beijing, Pyongyang, and other authoritarian capitals. Kim Jong Il suddenly wanted to do a deal over his nukes—until he detected the chance of a Kerry victory and got tough again until November 2. The surviving Leninist regimes were so aware of the string-of-firecrackers effect on tinder-dry dictatorships that their TV dared not show one picture of Saddam Hussein's statue biting the dust in Baghdad.

The rise of China is not necessarily a problem for the world except that China remains authoritarian. It is no accident that the two most antidemocratic regimes in Asia, North Korea and Burma, are its chief troublemakers (weapons and illicit drugs) *and* China's only quasi-allies in the world. The nature of Kim Jong Il's Stalinism precludes trust, effective inspections, or meaningful transmission of aid to the starving masses of North Korea. It becomes clearer with each lie from Pyongyang that only regime change there will free the Korean peninsula from nukes and grievous tension. Rangoon, for its part, has for 15 years rejected the result of a national election and kept the leader of the victorious party under house arrest.

A major liberalization—even short of democracy—in China would rock the shabby dictatorships in Pyongyang and Rangoon. A tide of democracy in all three would do more for peace, human rights, and, yes, stability in East Asia than a decade of "six country talks" or a hundred sessions of the Asian Regional Forum of ASEAN.

A major liberalization—even short of democracy—in China would rock the shabby dictatorships in Pyongyang and Rangoon.

Vice President Cheney spoke of democracy in East Asia's future in a speech in Shanghai last April: "The desire for freedom is universal; it is not unique to one country, or culture, or region." Cheney also said: "We hear it said by skeptics that the greater Middle East is a hopeless cause for democratic values. . . . Not so long ago, the very same things were said about the people of Asia. Yet . . . today across this region we see entire nations . . . building strong, modern economies, and becoming stable, peaceful, and open societies of free peoples, governed under laws set by representatives chosen in free elections."

The official Chinese news agency published a "full text" of the vice president's speech that omitted every single word I have quoted here. It makes you wonder: If democracy is not alluring to China's 1.3 billion people, why would the Chinese party-state—in breach of a promise to the vice president of the United States to broadcast live and publish his text—cut those words?

To speak of democracy as Bush did at his inauguration on January 20, is not, of course, to stipulate the methods to be used in encouraging it. But when the vision exists, the handles to be grasped come into view. So it was in the years after Reagan's speech to the British parliament in 1982. So it is proving as Bush's pre-Iraq predictions come true before our eyes. Both presidents saw with a piercing eye the shaky foundations beneath houses of tyranny. In East Asia, Chinese voices will be the ones to set the rafters shaking.

Democracy in Taiwan and timid shoots of democracy in Hong Kong have cast a fresh light on China's future.

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Beijing was shocked at the fall of the Soviet Union and the rest of the Communist gang in Europe. But it is driven crazy by the appearance of democracy within Chinese civilization. The Chinese Communist leaders know that if Taiwan goes its own way successfully and indefinitely—the fear that prompted Beijing to enact last week an "Anti-Secession Law" aimed at Taiwan—the virus of democracy will spread this "disaster" to the "motherland of China." After all, in Taiwan it is a series of free elections that has crystallized a sense of Taiwanese sovereignty.

It is fashionable to rejoice that China "is joining the international community," whatever that is. The *New York Times* goes further and claims China is pushing the United States aside in Asia because of Bush's policies. "More than 50 years of American dominance in Asia is subtly but unmistakably eroding," wrote Jane Perlez in October 2003; China has transformed itself "from a country to be feared to one that beckons." She was quite wrong, as the tsunami aftermath alone made plain. She will continue to be wrong so long as her reporting takes no account of the oxygen of democracy seeping into the cells of authoritarianism.

If Beijing is becoming Asia's leader, evidence is scarce. Apart from the undoubted contribution of China's economic success to the region, what role is she playing? Beijing is the centerpiece of a cluster of Communist states that are the final standard-bearers of Leninism in a post-Soviet world. These remaining Leninist states, plus Burma, form the heart of human rights problems in East Asia. Constructive leadership for Asia on Beijing's part? Is this what makes China the country "that beckons," as Perlez put it? China's eclipse of the United States in Asia is indeed so "subtle" that I seem to have missed it entirely.

China's prospects of becoming the centerpiece of a new order in East Asia, pushing the United States aside, are close to zero. Initial success would quickly issue in failure, because a Japan that saw China eclipse the United States would challenge China. Once again, as for six decades from 1894, China and Japan would vie for dominance over the region. China would also learn, as Washington has done painfully, that the risen one gets bitten by those whose feathers have been ruffled. Above all, an authoritarian China lacks moral appeal to Asia. It does not even have a comfortable grip over its own semi-empire in Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Inner Mongolia.

The critics of Bush's preemptions should remember that the failure to use military force in a timely manner has historically cost freedom dearly, and a trust in paper promises of peace has done the same. In 1928 the United States and France pledged no war ever between them, and, upon their invitation, 62 nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact. One of the High Contracting Parties was the emperor of Japan. Three years later Japan invaded Manchuria. The League of Nations sent a committee to look at the situation. No nation lifted a finger to punish Japan, or substantially help China defend itself against Japan's further onslaught in 1937. A military dictatorship had gotten away with aggression. Only a horrendous world war reversed the damage.

Liberal foreign policy gurus are terrified that President Bush may "make Beijing angry" or "displease China" if he talks of democracy and freedom. In one sense there is no way Washington can fully please Beijing. The Communist regime's anger at hegemonists (that's us) is a theology. America is needed as an adversary to shore up the legitimacy of a Communist party-state that came to power by the gun and has lost faith in Marxism. At a different level Washington need have little fear of Beijing. Bush's firm positions on Taiwan and missile defense have not reduced the worthwhile areas of U.S.-China cooperation. Partly this is thanks to 9/11, of course, but the reason lies deeper. Although the Communist party needs to assail us verbally, no economic, cultural, or security interest of China is served by hostility to the United States. For all its fiery words (in recent weeks about U.S.-Japan cooperation over Taiwan's security), China, a lesser power, respects the strength of the superpower.

The next China drama will unfold not in its foreign relations but at home, as huge internal migrations, the Internet, a middle-class push for property rights, imperial tensions, and life in the World Trade Organization strip bare the illogic of "market Leninism." Traveling one road in economics and a different one in politics does not make for a smooth ride or a settled destination. How that schizophrenia is resolved will clarify the heft and worth of China's world role.

China's behavior is far from all bad. What restrains Beijing is growing marketization within China, U.S. power that keeps Beijing's ambitions in check, the moral authority of Taiwan's democracy, and the imperative of filling American stores with Chinese clothes, photo albums, TVs, and shoes if the Communist party is to survive. These restraints all come *despite* the instincts of China's authoritarian political system. They are required of China by the power of free markets and democratic ideas, and by the muscle of Uncle Sam, who is the beacon of both. Bush's words last week at the National Defense University apply with special force to East Asia: Dictatorship is the "last gasp of a discredited past." So do Reagan's words to the British parliament: "Let us tell the world that a new age is not only possible but probable." ♦

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Tom Wolfe and fans

Getty / Mark Wilson

Our Literary Leaders

Books are at home in the White House By Richard Norton Smith

I read the [Joseph J.] Ellis book, which is a really interesting book—His Excellency, *it's called—and [David] McCullough is writing a book on George Washington as well. People are constantly . . . evaluating a president's standing in history.*
—*George W. Bush press conference, March 16*

A bipartisan fluttering of eyebrows greeted the news that President Bush has been recommending to friends Tom Wolfe's sex-drenched novel of collegiate America, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*. While moral watchdogs of the right were dismayed by the president's choice of reading matter, critics on the left professed astonishment that Mr. Bush read anything more challenging than TelePrompters and the sports page. Bluenose versus blue state: The latest dust-up over presidential reading habits reflects a cultural divide as old as the republic.

"You will never be alone with a poet in your pocket," claimed John Adams, whose political solitude mirrored his condescension toward those unfortunate enough to live outside New England. "Boston town meetings and our Harvard College have set the universe in motion," insisted Adams. His self-regard was matched by his envy of the godlike George Washington. Thus the first vice president attributed the first president's success to a fortunate marriage, to his majestic physique—"like the Hebrew sovereign chosen because he was taller by the head than the other Jews"—to anything, in short, but Washington's bookishness.

"You see I have made out ten talents," observed Adams smugly, "without saying a word about reading, thinking, or writing."

Washington was more of a reader than generally supposed, though pleasure took a back seat to self-improvement in his library, as in his life. Hoping to squeeze a profit from the thin, unproductive soil of Mount Vernon, Farmer Washington ordered *Tull's Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, billed as "a new system of Agriculture, or a speedy way to grow rich." Almost 900 other volumes crowded his bookshelves, among them the speeches of Cicero and *Aesop's Fables*, novels by Samuel Butler and Henry Fielding, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and John Locke's *Essay On Human Understanding*.

As an adolescent seeking admission to the aristocratic circles frequented by his half-brother Lawrence, Washington famously copied out of *110 Rules of Civility*. No book in print, however,

Richard Norton Smith, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, is working on a biography of Nelson Rockefeller.

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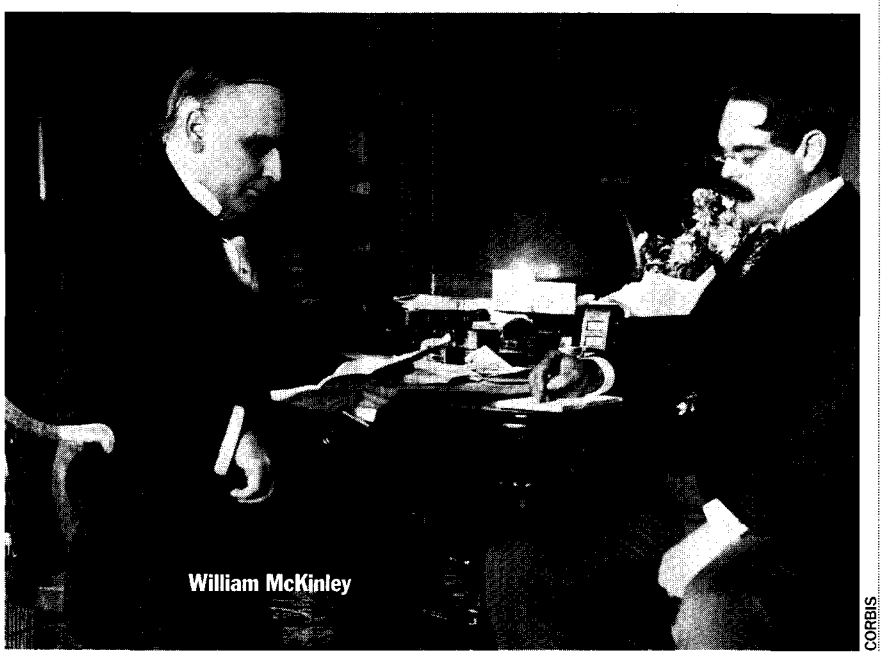
Abraham Lincoln and family

could teach adult Washington how to found a republic, or inspire a tattered army, or manage the warring egos of subordinates. In time, meetings of his cabinet degenerated into periwigged street brawls between Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. "I cannot live without books," acknowledged Jefferson, who could most assuredly have lived without Hamilton. Disdaining Plato's *Republic* for its "unintelligible jargon," the polymath Virginia planter preferred Molière, Homer, Hume's *History of England*, and *King Lear*. Science and philosophy occupied at least as much space in his Monticello library as law, politics, and economics.

Although books enriched Jefferson intellectually, they impoverished him in every other sense. It was somehow fitting that this champion of frugal government and lavish living should ward off bankruptcy in old age by selling his personal library of 6,500 volumes to Congress to replace the collection destroyed by British troops in the War of 1812. Just as predictably, Jefferson immediately began assembling a new library that he could ill afford.



William McKinley

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Meanwhile, the Sage of Monticello and the Squire of Crawford have at least one thing in common. "The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers," complained Jefferson. This is a view held by many, if not most, White House occupants, including Bush's immediate predecessor, whose omnivorous literary appetites border on the Jeffersonian. But there is a difference: The famously compartmentalized Bill Clinton loves books without, as Jefferson often appeared to do, living in them. A list of Clinton's 21 favorite titles released by his presidential library runs the gamut from Maya Angelou and Marcus Aurelius to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the poetry of Seamus Heaney, the piety of Thomas à Kempis, and his own wife's *Living History*.

Can a president read too much? Shown an advance copy of William Henry Harrison's 1841 inaugural address, a horrified Daniel Webster spent a full day rewriting the president-elect's mouldy paean to ancient Rome. Arriving late for a dinner party that evening, Webster struck a triumphant note, declaring, "I have killed 17 Roman proconsuls as dead as smelts." He should have killed more. Even in edited form, Harrison's inaugural address clocked in at one hour and 40 minutes. Thoroughly chilled, and semi-exhausted, the 68-year-old president caught cold and died within a month, a martyr to misplaced erudition.

No such fate seems likely to befall George W. Bush. Married to a former librarian, Bush likes short speeches and, judging from a recent reading list (Ron Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton*, Joseph J. Ellis's *His Excellency: George Washington*), lengthy books. Early in its first term the Bush White House established an authors lecture series, which enabled the president to pick the brains of David McCullough, Edmund Morris, Martin Gilbert, Bernard Lewis, and Robert Kaplan, among others. Bush has publicly acknowledged his debt to Natan Sharansky's *The Case for Democracy*, which distinguishes between

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Theodore Roosevelt Collection / Harvard College Library

Theodore Roosevelt and friend

"free" and "fear" societies, and exalts Ronald Reagan's moral confrontation with Soviet tyranny. A recent *New York Times* story described his admiration for Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

Like John Quincy Adams, Bush reads the Bible every morning on rising (alternating scripture with the inspirational writings of Oswald Chambers, the Scottish-born chaplain who died in 1917 at the age of 42). Bush, like Adams, emulates his mother more than his presidential father. There the similarities end. The second Adams wrote English with one hand while translating Greek with the other, and complained that his official duties deprived him of the companionship of old friends Cicero and Tacitus. As a former professor of oratory at Harvard, Adams was openly contemptuous of the unlettered Andrew Jackson. He was appalled to learn in 1833 that his beloved alma mater intended to bestow an honorary degree on the Tennessee frontiersman who personified the triumph of western democracy, "a barbarian who could not write a sentence of grammar and could hardly spell his own name."

When the time came, Jackson showed more dignity than his learned detractors, sitting quietly through a commencement conducted almost entirely in Latin. Contrary to Harvard legend, on receiving his degree, the old Indian warrior did not bow to his audience and declaim, "*Ipso facto. Tempus fugit. Sine qua non.*" In the 20th century, similar jests would be made at the expense of Ronald Reagan, another westerner whose commitment to smaller government was combined with a popular style that mystified the intelligentsia. As a boy living a nomadic existence in small-town Illinois, Reagan taught himself to read at five. His youthful pleasures were solitary ones—drawing cartoons, studying local birds and wildlife, devouring the adventures of the Rover Boys, *Tarzan*, and *Frank Merriwell at Yale*.

Young Reagan lost himself in science fiction—leading to claims that Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Princess of Mars* incubated the Strategic Defense Initiative to shoot down enemy missiles before they could strike U.S. soil. Reagan's preoccupation with Armageddon came straight from the Bible. *That Printer of Udell's*, an allegorical work by Harold Bell Wright, inspired 12-year-old Ron—like Wright's protagonist, the son of an alcoholic—to join his mother's evangelical church.

The future president's midlife conversion from New Deal liberal to Goldwater conservative was prompted by more than a 91 percent marginal tax rate on his Hollywood earnings. As Stephen F. Hayward has persuasively argued, Reagan was a self-taught conservative, less Burkean in his outlook than a radical disciple of Thomas Paine's revolutionary optimism. Nor is it difficult to unearth the intellectual roots of the Reagan Revolution. They can be found in Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*, Friedrich Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, and other heavily underlined volumes housed in then-governor Reagan's Pacific Palisades study. Like Bush today, Reagan was only too glad to be underestimated by the Washington establishment. Let Clark Clifford proclaim him "an amiable dunce": As

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Seated, left to right: Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Warren G. Harding, Harvey Firestone

part of his preparations for a Geneva summit with Mikhail Gorbachev, Reagan would seek the counsel of well regarded scholars like Robert and Suzanne Massie, prominent students of Russian history. A 1984 presidential reading list prepared at the request of the *Baltimore Sun* included David Lamb's *The Africans*, *The Third World War* by General Sir John Hackett, and *Dezinformatsia*, by Richard Schultz and Roy Godson.

None of this disarmed those for whom Reagan appeared both incurious and trigger-happy. History repeats itself, though less often than historians. Before Reagan there was Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose scrambled syntax and defiantly middlebrow tastes drew cackles of derision from sophisticates supporting Adlai Stevenson, the original Egghead, on whose night table at the time of his death in 1965 was found a copy of *The Social Register*. As a boy in Abilene, Kansas, Eisenhower read everything he could get his hands on about military chieftains like Hannibal and Robert E. Lee. Yet just as the 1950s were caricatured as a time of grey-suited mediocrity, a bland interregnum between the New Deal and the New Frontier, so Eisenhower was pilloried for finding diversion in Zane Grey novels. Robert Frost knew better. When he visited Ike in the Oval Office, Frost gave the president a volume of his own poetry, with the telling inscription, "The Strong Are Saying Nothing Till They See."

As Washington, Jackson, and Eisenhower demonstrate, military men are particularly susceptible to intellectual stereotyping. Resentful that his family's grip on the White House had been broken before his turn at the place, Henry Adams opined that one could easily disprove Darwin's theory of evolution merely by tracing the line of presidential descent from Washington to Ulysses S. Grant (whose favorite book was said to be Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*). Grant gave as good as he got. Informed that Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner took issue with the Bible, the president snorted, "That's only because he didn't write it." Ironically, the man who dismissed James Garfield and other Republican reformers as a bunch of "damned literary fellows" would go on to author one of the classic autobiographies in the English language.

Garfield, of course, didn't live to write his memoirs. In the White House, this onetime Ohio schoolteacher took refuge from political slings and arrows by translating Latin odes. Garfield particularly enjoyed the novels of Jane Austen, which he pronounced superior in every way to current fiction. "The novel of today," he declared with a censoriousness alien to Charlotte Simmons, "is highly spiced with sensation, and I suspect it results from the general tendency to fast living, increased nervousness, and the general spirit of rush that seems to pervade life and thought in our times." Following the assassination of her husband in 1881, Lucretia Garfield was showered with money by grieving Americans. She promptly built a library to hold her husband's books and to uphold his memory.

Woodrow Wilson was another schoolmaster, albeit one who ranked political theory above imaginative literature. The only Ph.D. to occupy the White House, as a boy, Wilson found reading of any sort difficult. Many Wilson scholars believe it was dyslexia that prompted young Tommy Wilson to teach himself shorthand and cultivate an oratorical style of leadership better suited to parliament than the presidency. Wilson the academic was almost too prolific. His multivolume *History of the American People* offended recent immigrants, "men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative or quick intelligence." Even Chinese workmen were preferable, wrote Professor Wilson, to "the coarse crew that came crowding in every year at the eastern ports."

In the 1912 campaign, candidate Wilson was forced to eat his words, promising to remove derogatory passages in the next edition of his magnum opus. He was less successful in placating that other Scholar in Politics, Henry Cabot Lodge. Long before they debated the League of Nations, the two men argued the merits of their rival biographies of George Washington. Lodge sneered at the "Woodrovian Style," archly commenting that it might be good enough for Princeton, but it would never pass muster at Harvard. Lodge also figured in the savage competition pitting Wilson against Theodore Roosevelt. Wilson's habit of writing diplomatic notes in response to national humiliation earned him the derisive Rooseveltian sobriquet of "Byzantine logothete."

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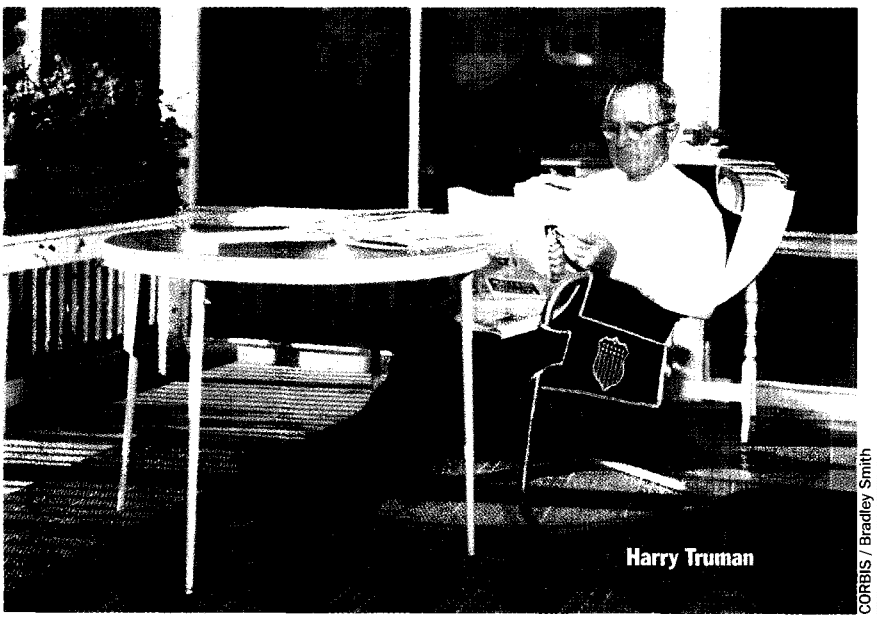
In the White House, TR was that rarest of animals: a man of action who could not live without a book in his hand. "To succeed in getting measures like these through [Congress] one has to be a rough and tumble man one's self," Roosevelt explained to the British historian G.M. Trevelyan, "and I find it a great comfort to like all kinds of books, and to get a half-an-hour or an hour's complete rest and complete detachment from the fighting of the moment by plunging into the genius and misdeeds of Marlborough . . . or in short anything that Macaulay wrote . . . or any one of most of the novels of Scott, or some of the novels of Thackeray and Dickens."

Getty Images

Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt

Ever the moralist, Roosevelt pronounced a "fundamental difference" between the two great Victorians, concluding that Thackeray was a gentleman and Dickens was not. Dubbed Theodore Rex by novelist Henry James, TR reciprocated by calling James a "miserable little snob." The author-expatriate replied in kind, categorizing the dynamic godfather to the modern presidency as "the mere monstrous embodiment of unprecedented and resounding noise." This was not altogether unjust, given TR's gleeful reliance on the personal pronoun. Mr. Dooley spoke for many who read Roosevelt's egocentric account of his Rough Riding adventures, when he suggested this nominal military history should more properly be entitled *Alone in Cuba*.

Other presidents turned to books for policy inspiration. Long before the era of compassionate conservatism, Richard Nixon wrapped himself in the mantle of Benjamin Disraeli, the consequence of having read Lord Robert Blake's magisterial biography of the great 19th-century British prime minister whose name is synonymous with reform conservatism. Court intellectual Daniel Patrick Moynihan adroitly guessed that Nixon the outsider would identify with Disraeli, the Jew whose Tory democracy found its 20th-century counterpart in the Silent Majority. To Disraeli, his Oxford biographer, and Moynihan, history may well credit such Nixonian initiatives as the Environmental Protection Agency, affirmative action, and the indexing of Social Security and other safety-net programs.



Harry Truman

CORBIS / Bradley Smith

Harry Truman loved books more than bourbon. As a self-confessed mama's boy imprisoned behind coke-bottle glasses, Truman inhabited distant times and foreign cultures through volumes like *Great Men and Famous Women*. As a senator conducting sensitive investigations of military contracts during World War II, a frustrated Truman fantasized about going away somewhere and burying himself in Shakespeare and Plutarch. His thorough knowledge of the Bible and his deep immersion in the ancients made him naturally sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Not long before he died, asked if he liked to read himself to sleep at night, the ex-president replied, "No, young man. I like to read myself awake."

Similarly motivated, Rutherford B. Hayes found stimulation in the pages of Emerson. Calvin Coolidge, improbably, translated Dante's *Inferno* from the original Italian. In 1927, Coolidge read *Main Street and Wall Street*, a

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Getty Images

Ronald Reagan in the Cabinet Room

scathing indictment of stock market dishonesty by Harvard's William Z. Ripley. As recounted in Geoffrey Perrett's *America in the Twenties*, an alarmed president invited the author to the White House for an extended conversation. Deeply troubled by what he heard, Coolidge asked Ripley, "Is there anything that we can do down here?"

"No," replied the professor, for whom indignation clearly trumped imagination, "It's a state matter." And so it remained, until a less passive executive overrode tradition and Harvard expertise alike. A fan of detective stories who could speed-read *Gone With the Wind* in three hours, Franklin Roosevelt owed much to economist Stuart Chase and his 1932 volume *A New Deal*, whose concluding sentence inquired, "Why should Russians have all the fun of remaking a world?"

It should be obvious by now that what a president reads before his days in the White House is at least as consequential as anything he reads while in office. The autodidact James Madison completed his four-year college course in two years, and subsequently distilled dozens of works of political theory and the law of nations into a first draft of an American Constitution. Neither Voltaire nor the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*, however, could supply Madison's deficiencies as a wartime leader. More flexible was John F. Kennedy, the sole Pulitzer Prize-winner among presidential authors. Kennedy's youthful imagination had been set afire by David Cecil's *The Young Melbourne* and anything from the pen of Winston Churchill. Himself shadowed by the prospect of early death, JFK cherished John Buchan's *Pilgrim's Way* for its haunting portrait of the "debonair, brilliant, and brave" Raymond Asquith, a future prime minister cut down on the Western Front in 1916.

As president, Kennedy the romantic proved very much the realist. In the spring of 1962, he handed Secretary of the Army Elvis Stahr a copy of Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August*. "I want you to read this," he said, "and I want every officer in the Army to read it." According to Kennedy biographer Richard Reeves, Stahr took the president at his word, ordering the book placed in officers' dayrooms on U.S. military bases around the world. Closer to home, a different kind of war was brewing, thanks to Michael Harrington's groundbreaking study *The Other America*. Kennedy never read the book, but he was sufficiently impressed by Dwight MacDonald's review in the *New Yorker* to ponder a second-term war on poverty. In the end, it was left to Lyndon Johnson, reading men instead of books, to infuse Kennedy's cerebral vision with his own singular passion.

And what of the greatest of American presidents, a leader whose actions have inspired more volumes than any historical figure next to Jesus Christ? Abraham Lincoln's earliest memories revolved around dreary farm labor, from which Parson Weems's idealized

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portrait of George Washington afforded an enterprising boy some momentary respite. Lincoln read the King James Bible for its literary cadence long before he appreciated its spiritual consolations. Shakespeare helped him master the language with an eloquence that has never been equaled. From an early age, Lincoln displayed a special fondness for the Bard's tragedies, none more so than *Richard II*, with its lugubrious invitation to sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings. His 1860 campaign biographer, John L. Scripps, not content to have Lincoln repay a farmer for a damaged book with three days' hard labor, conjured up a young scholar at home in *Plutarch's Lives*. This charming tale had but one shortcoming: It had been made up out of whole cloth by a writer who simply assumed, as he put it in a postelection letter to the victorious candidate, that Lincoln was familiar with the classic work. If not, wrote an embarrassed Scripps, Lincoln "must read it at once to make my statement good." Although the author received no formal reply, the Library of Congress did in the form of a White House request to borrow the volume in question.

In the next four years, Lincoln gained the secular immortality he had first glimpsed as a youth spellbound by Weems's *Life of Washington*. No small amount of our continuing fascination with the 16th president is due to his elusive combination of opposites. The teller of smutty stories is also the author of imperishable prose. On September 22, 1862, Lincoln prefaced a cabinet discussion of his proposed Emancipation Proclamation by reading a chapter from Artemus Ward's latest satire, "High Handed Outrage at Utica." Few others in the room shared his appreciation of Ward's burlesque on the Last Supper. Lincoln didn't care. Ward's foolishness offered him temporary escape from the crushing responsibilities of office.

George W. Bush, who is said to admire Lincoln above all his predecessors, may or may not know the details of this poignant scene. But he expressed what Lincoln and other successful presidents have felt when he told C-SPAN's Brian Lamb, in January 2005: "Books are a great escape. Books are a great way to get your mind on something else." Even if it's Texas artist Tom Lea's *The King Ranch* (No. 376,870 on Amazon.com). Ultimately, *what* a president reads may be less important than *why* he reads. It is to be hoped that he reads to expand his knowledge, deepen his sympathies, gain perspective, and cultivate a humility at odds with Washington, D.C.'s preening self-importance.

"The whole point of getting things done," according to Oswald Chambers, "is knowing what to leave undone." If Bush's choice of reading material doesn't always sit well with elite tastemakers, this, too, is part of the democratic tradition. After all, it was the president's distant kinsman, Franklin Pierce, who entrusted the writing of his 1852 campaign biography to his college classmate, and America's most distinguished novelist, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Less read than admired, even in his own day, Hawthorne described Pierce, the most dismal of presidential failures, as "deep, deep, deep." It just goes to show: You can't always judge a president, or a book, by its cover. ♦

Unforgivable

"The Upside of Anger" has a downside

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

For awhile, a new movie called *The Upside of Anger* seems like a miracle. The film simply records the actions of the movie's fierce and fascinating heroine, a well-to-do mother of four girls ranging in age from 15 to 22, as she falls to pieces. Suddenly abandoned by her husband, Terry Wolfmeyer spends all day in her silky negligee with a glass of Grey Goose vodka in her hand. She showers at 5:30 in the afternoon and leaves the cooking and cleaning to her daughters. She rants, she jokes, and she hurls withering glances at the girls if they do not respond as she wishes.

Since alcoholic misery loves company, Terry starts spending time with Denny Davies, a former major-league baseball starter turned radio talk-show host, who lives nearby. She's a mean drunk. He's a goofy and cheerful drunk. After awhile, they figure they should have an affair, but he panics and hides in his yard when she comes calling.

At one point, her daughters come upon Terry lying in bed, eyes open, unable to move even though she has to drive her youngest to school. She complains that she can't bring herself to behave like the women going through divorces in television movies, who square their shoulders and get on with life.

Indeed, in an age when divorce is mostly played for laughs on the small and big screens, there's something especially ennobling about the opening hour of *The Upside of Anger*. The movie takes Terry's pain seriously. You believe it when she says that this is a heartbreak from which she can never recover—and you take Denny seriously, as well, when he says that she will rally but will always bear the emotional scars, that it will be like walking with a limp.

What makes *The Upside of Anger*'s focus even more stunning is that there is only one other American movie I can recall that offers a comparably convincing portrait of a woman mired in grief and abandonment. *Men Don't Leave*, which was released in 1990, features a remarkable Jessica Lange as a young widow who does indeed try to

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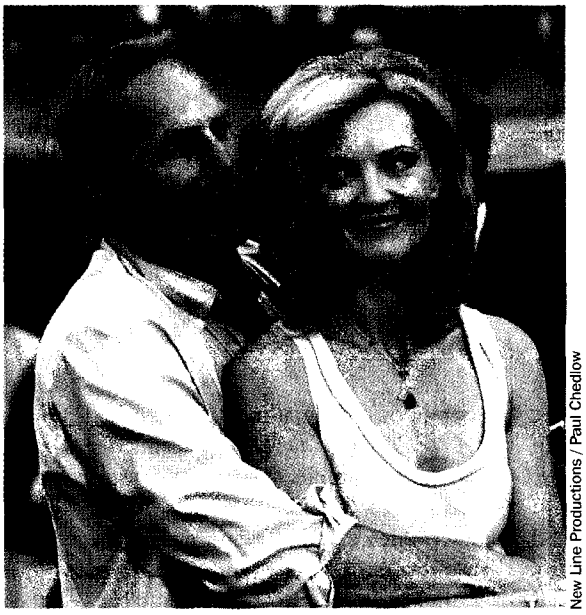
square her shoulders and get on with life, but halfway through the film falls prey to a paralyzing depression.

There's a serious problem with trying to portray depression on film. How do you do it without making the movie a terrible downer? *Men Don't Leave* couldn't figure it out. It leaves one feeling almost as crushed as Jessica Lange's character. The writer and director of *The Upside of Anger*, Mike Binder, succeeds where *Men Don't Leave* fails because his movie is actually funny. Terry isn't a very admirable person, but she is clever and sharp-tongued, and always seems to have something interesting and unexpected to say. The beautiful and usually recessive actress Joan Allen, who plays Terry, knows this is the part of a lifetime, and she tears into it like a female Pacino. She may go over the top a bit, may chew on the scenery here and there, but she's so unrestrained and game you have to love her.

Allen is sensational, but it's Kevin Costner who is the revelation here. In his first major role, in 1985's *Silverado*, Costner played a rowdy firecracker of a cowboy. Then he became a leading man and all the life and vigor seemed to drain from his body. There's never been a duller movie star, and it's shocking to think that it's been nearly 15 years since he made a picture anybody wanted to see (his last hit was, of all things, *JFK*). Maybe it took all that time and all that failure for the energy he showed in *Silverado* to return. This is an indelible comic portrayal of a classic American type: the pretty boy gone to seed, the amiable guy who's lost his sense of purpose, the drunken stoner who's still drinking and smoking pot while most everybody he's known has embraced adulthood.

When the movie focuses on Terry and Denny, it's really quite wonderful —and whenever writer-director Binder is on-screen in his secondary part as Denny's slimy radio producer, it crackles as well. But something is off when *The Upside of Anger* concerns itself with Terry's four daughters and her relationship with them. The girls don't seem particularly affected one way or the other by their father's disappearance or their mother's drunkenness. The oldest dislikes Terry for other reasons that go unexplored. Another daughter supposedly acts out to get her mother's goat, but because the part is poorly written and the actress playing her (Erika Christensen) so disastrously bad, her choices seem inexplicable. A third wants to be a dancer and Terry disapproves, but fortunately for her



New Line Productions / Paul Chedlow

Kevin Costner, Joan Allen

she becomes deathly ill so Terry gets nicer about it. The youngest just seems to be living in the house as a boarder, even though she is nominally the narrator of the film.

These are forgivable flaws. But what is not forgivable, what makes *The Upside of Anger* one of the most disappointing movies I can remember, is its ending. For it turns out that Terry's husband hasn't actually left her. Three years after the movie begins, Denny discovers that the poor fellow was taking a walk in some parkland behind their house, fell in a well, and died.

Everything about this plot twist—everything—is awful. It shatters any pretense that the world we're seeing in *The Upside of Anger* bears any relation to the world we live in. In the first place, Mike Binder asks us to believe it never occurred to anyone that the husband's disappearance might have been caused by an accident. Wouldn't one of the daughters have thought to call the police, even if Terry didn't? Don't they have access to telephones and the Internet so that they could try to track their father down in Sweden (where Terry believes he has gone with a former secretary)?

Worse than that, though, is that, thematically, the plot twist invalidates everything we've seen before it. Terry's anger at her missing husband is, it appears, entirely unfounded. Rather than having been the victim of a horrible injustice, she has done her husband a cosmic injustice. She's not an admirable-but-confused woman; she's a monster.

The movie's final scene takes place after the husband's funeral. No one sheds so much as a tear for the horrible death experienced by the unfairly maligned corpse. Not one of the daughters denounces her mother for her unparalleled cruelty. Denny does not flee from Terry as from the plague, which is what any normal person would do. No, they all hug and smile and find solace in each other as they sit in the backyard of the house, looking off into the spot where Mr. Wolfmeyer met his gruesome demise. We learn from a voiceover narration that anger is a very bad thing. It is to be avoided and rejected. But we are also told the "upside of anger" is that it "makes us into the people we become."

There is one upside to the anger I experienced as the closing credits rolled. It convinced me to blow the surprise ending so that you could leave the theater after about an hour and 50 minutes. When you see Kevin Costner starting to walk into the backyard with a couple of contractors, get your coat and leave. You'll think better of *The Upside of Anger* and not have the pleasures of seeing it damaged by the well-deserved contempt you'll feel if you stay until the bitter end. ♦

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"I had that Ozzy Osbourne nightmare again."

Books in Brief

***John Adams: Party of One* by James Grant (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 540 pp., $30)** "The history of our Revolution will be one continued lie from one end to the other," John Adams complained in 1790. "The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin's electrical rod smote the Earth and out sprung General Washington"—and that "these two conducted all the policy, negotiations, legislatures and war."

It would be a lie, in other words, because it wouldn't say enough about Adams, despite his essential service as a revolutionary, political theorist (an ardent exponent of balancing and frustrating power—the model adopted in the U.S. Constitution), diplomat, and, eventually, president. Adams's gnawing conviction that posterity would underrate his contribution proved all too prescient, at least for two centuries. But in the "Founders boom" of recent years, his reputation has undergone an astonishing transformation—capped, in 2001, by David McCullough's beautifully written but hagiographic-trending blockbuster *John Adams*.

Now comes a new volume, James Grant's *John Adams: Party of One*, that faithfully restores many of the great man's warts. On the second page of text, Grant quotes Franklin's famous take on Adams: "He means well for his country, is always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes, and in some things, is absolutely out of his senses." With wit and charm, covering an extraordinarily rich life in a brisk 540 pages, Grant explains why there was much to Ben Franklin's gloss.

Of course, the Adams that emerges is all the more interesting and endearing for it. He is, by far, the most approachable of the Founders because he could not help revealing his heart in wonderfully pithy sentences. Adams confessed he lacked "the gift of silence" that had served Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin so well. We are the beneficiaries of that failing, and Grant sprinkles Adams's tart phrases on almost every page.

By the same token, Grant supports his contention that "in great matters John Adams could exhibit all the wisdom, forbearance, and charity for which he justly deserves to be honored." Here is the Adams who fought, as president, for peace through strength; who defied his cabinet in commuting the death penalty of a tax rebel; who moved steadily toward religious tolerance. Grant, a financial writer (editor of *Grant's Interest Rate Observer*), is especially strong in describing the debt-hating Puritan's success as a "junk bond promoter" in raising money for his struggling young country. One gets the sense that old Adams, his own harshest critic and biggest fan, would appreciate Grant's shrewd and witty treatment.

—Edward Achorn

***The Essential Ronald Reagan* by Lee Edwards (Rowman and Littlefield, 176 pp., $19.95)** Reagan scholar Lee Edwards offers a brief, anecdotal profile of the 40th president in his new book *The Essential Ronald Reagan*. Edwards begins by outlining Reagan's life from his humble roots in Illinois through his Hollywood career and eventual emergence as a national conservative icon. He then devotes several sections to the Cold War and touches on tax reform, abortion, and welfare.

Throughout the book, much of Edwards's focus remains on Reagan's remarkable leadership and character. For Edwards, Reagan's success in office rested on exactly these traits—his courage after the 1981 assassination attempt; his prudence in crafting a Cold War strategy that was pivotal to bringing down the Soviet Empire; and his insistence on wide-ranging domestic reforms.

Edwards also takes note of Reagan's famous sense of humor by sprinkling in some of his famous quips, like telling Mrs. Reagan, "Honey, I forgot to duck," when she arrived at the hospital after he'd been shot. Or, while on the operating table, saying to doctors, "I hope you're all Republicans."

As Edwards rightly notes, Reagan is an "American for the ages."

—Loredana Vuoto

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Parody

President Bush said today he is nominating Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz to be the next president of the World Bank, tapping one of his administration's most controversial figures as the U.S. choice to head the 184-nation institution.

—News item

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23,

VOL. CLIX . . .No. 81

Wolfowitz Memo Reveals Plan To 'Repossess' Debtor Nations

Ethiopia to be renamed 'Abyssinia'

By ELIZABETH BECKER and DAVID E. SANGER

WASHINGTON, March 22 — In a White House memorandum leaked to The New York Times yesterday, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz, President Bush's nominee for president of the World Bank, revealed that as head of the mammoth lending institution, he plans to "repossess" debtor nations that have failed to make timely payments to international lenders.

"Behold, the Great Game is afoot!" Mr. Wolfowitz exclaimed in the opening of his memo, cryptically titled "PNAC 68." Mr. Wolfowitz will recommend the appointment of World Bank proconsuls and viceroys for the most seriously delinquent nations, some of which will also be renamed "temporarily and strictly for clarification purposes." Names mentioned in the memo include Mesopotamia, the Belgian Congo, Samaria, Siam, Tatooine and Mordor.

"The United States has never been in the business of running an empire," Mr. Wolfowitz insisted. "Nor has the World Bank. Therefore, British Honduras will be the responsibility of the Blair government. Likewise, Italy (obviously under careful supervision) will handle affairs in Tripolitania and Abyssinia." European critics of the Bush administration expressed shock and outrage over the leaked memo. According to one unnamed German minister, "This confirms our direst suspicions about Herr Vulfuvitz and his imperialist, neo-conservative impulses. But we are prepared to oversee Alsace-Lorraine, the Low Countries, and Poland, if he requires us to."

Asked to comment, Mr. Wolfowitz told reporters, "The message I want to convey to debtor nations is, 'Don't worry, be happy.' They will be cared for quite well under the guidance of seasoned diplomats, members of the Bilderberg Group, and the resident scholars of the American Enterprise Institute."

In a television interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, Mr. Wolfowitz, who replaces James D. Wolfensohn

Continued on Page A9

Retire
for p
John

Don Zimmer To Congress: 'I Took Steroids'

the weekly Standard

MARCH 28, 2005

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In the current debate on Social Security reform, President Bush has refused to rule out a tax increase on those who earn more than $90,000 a year. That's the current maximum earned income on which Americans pay Social Security (FICA) taxes. Republican senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina has suggested making all earned income up to $200,000 taxable. Such a tax is a bad idea. There is not only a strong economic case against it but also a strong moral one.

First, the economics. Increasing the amount of taxed income would massively raise marginal tax rates for many of the most productive people. The marginal tax rate on those whose income is between $90,000 and $200,000 would increase by 6.2 percentage points for employees and by a whopping 12.4 percentage points for the self-employed. (Part of the 6.2 points paid by the employer would be borne by the employee, but that's a longer story.) Most people with earned income between $90,000 and $200,000 face a marginal tax rate of 31 to 40.5 percent. They are in a 25 to 33 percent federal income tax bracket. Their state tax bracket, adjusted for the deductibility of state taxes on their federal tax form, is about 4.5 to 6 percent. They also pay a 1.45 percent Medicare tax (2.9 percent for the self-employed) on all earnings. Thus **raising the cap would increase taxes on those affected by up to one fifth of their current marginal tax rate.**

A salaried worker making $200,000 a year would pay $6,820 more in taxes every year, whereas a self-employed worker would pay $13,640 more. This would be the biggest tax increase on high-income people since President Clinton's and, for many people, would be a bigger tax increase than Clinton's. A rise in marginal tax rates would discourage work. The person previously in the 40.5 percent bracket would keep only 53.3 cents of an additional dollar earned, down from 59.5 cents before the tax increase. People would also find ways of being paid other than by taxable income, such as by receiving a company car.

Second, the morality. **A tax increase on people who already get a lousy deal from Social Security is wrong.** Presumably, benefits for higher-income taxpayers would not rise in line with taxes. Otherwise, why raise the tax in the first place? The purpose of the tax is to generate more revenue to solve the long-term funding problem, which would not occur if the government raised Social Security benefits dollar for dollar. Furthermore, even if Bush planned to raise benefits, that's little comfort. Many people are happy to save their own money for retirement. Currently, a few million Americans can look forward every year to reaching the existing threshold ($90,000 in 2005) and knowing that the feds will keep their FICA hands off any additional income. We should be free to save that money or spend it as we wish. What a tragedy it would be if a president who believes in the "ownership society" ended up further violating citizens' rights to their own income.

—David R. Henderson

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